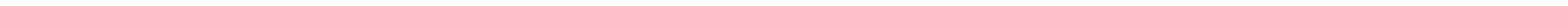




DOWNTOWN WORCESTER

THEATRE DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

DECEMBER 2012



Prepared For:
Worcester Business Development Corporation

In Association with the
City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Aerial photograph of Downtown Worcester and study area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past decade, Downtown Worcester has witnessed substantial public and private investment. Major commercial initiatives are underway at CitySquare and Gateway Park. The Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences is involved in unprecedented institutional expansion on Foster Street and in Lincoln Square. A new residential community is being developed around Franklin and Portland Street. The Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts and growing public activity on Worcester Common prove that residents of Worcester and beyond are eager to come to Downtown Worcester for cultural activity and entertainment.

These investors, and others, have demonstrated that despite the difficult economic conditions of the last few years, there are opportunities for redevelopment in Downtown Worcester. Recent investments in the Downtown have assisted in the transformation of the Downtown to one that attracts a diverse crowd, including the region's growing cast of young professionals.

This Master Plan serves as a new phase in efforts to study and plan for investment and activity in key areas within the Downtown. The Downtown has been the focus of significant planning efforts including, but not limited to, the CitySquare District Improvement Plan, the Washington Square Redevelopment Strategy, the North Main Economic Development Strategy, and the Beacon-Federal Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. Each of these plans contributes to a vision for a vibrant, diverse City that attracts and serves the needs of residents, business, and visitors. These plans, paired with public investment and private initiative, guide strategies to lay a strong foundation for growth over the days, months, years, and decades that it takes to build a new city. The goal of this Master Plan is to extend the success of these revitalization efforts to the District surrounding City Hall and Worcester Common, building on the strength of such institutions as the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, the Worcester Public Library, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS), the DCU Center and Saint Vincent Hospital/Vanguard. It is a guide to public and private actors within the District to work together to coordinate efforts to build new energy into this core area of Worcester.

Each of the investments referenced above are significant opportunities for change in the Downtown. The Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, for example, has been a successful regional attraction. Yet it is only one element in a transforming neighborhood. Worcester has failed to take advantage of its resources if the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts is the sole destination for an individual theater-goer. The Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC) and the City of Worcester recognize that the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts is a critical step on a path that requires ongoing efforts to target difficult properties and activities and effectuate real change. Additional anchors – institutional, residential, and commercial – are necessary to create significant enhancement and leveraged growth. In this particular case, the fastest growing industry and job creators in Worcester, like many places across the nation and New England, are its high-quality health care, education, and research institutions. This plan looks to capitalize on Worcester's strength in this arena to build a Theatre District that partners institutional investment and expansion with the residential, cultural, restaurant, and retail demand that follows. These uses will be the drivers of District growth and spur improvements to activate street life throughout the District.

The Vision

We envision a Downtown Theatre District that is as an active, mixed-use, 18-hour neighborhood with significant institutional and residential growth supporting a vibrant entertainment and cultural environment drawing residents, businesses, and visitors to Downtown Worcester. Key corridors, including Main Street, Federal Street, and Front Street will serve to tie District-wide activity together to make a walkable, inviting center of activity. Federal Street, the heart of the District, will be a tightly compressed pedestrian street plaza - a public gathering space - lined with food, entertainment and retail activity that:

- Creates a sense of place
- Serves as the center of the expanded Theatre/Creative District

- And connects all of the entertainment and creative venues both in the District and throughout Downtown.

Key destinations within the District, such as City Hall, the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, the YWCA, and the Worcester Public Library, and destinations outside the District such as Union Station, the DCU Center, and Mechanics Hall will connect to continue the comprehensive transformation of Downtown Worcester as the heart of one of New England's great cities.

This Vision must be built with an understanding of the strengths, and challenges, of the current marketplace and the need to support the many investments already made by many dedicated stakeholders. The realization of this Plan requires partnerships with other active property owners and investors including residential developers, CitySquare II Development Company, LLC (CitySquare), and Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

The Master Plan

The primary goal of this Master Plan, therefore, is to create a district identity and sense of place within Downtown Worcester, and to identify buildings and sites that provide the primary transformation opportunities for institutional, housing, and entertainment/cultural uses, and the infrastructure improvements needed to support those uses. Several downtown sites have been identified as primary opportunities for transformation. Included are vacant and under-utilized buildings in need of renovation and parcels for new construction. For each catalytic project, the plan outlines the anticipated use, scale, and the implementation steps for realization. One example is the former Telegram and Gazette (T&G) building (20 Franklin Street) which could be transformed into a dynamic building with a great mix of uses – office, academic, conference space, and entertainment/retail. The Theatre District offers a wealth of opportunity to craft a modern sense of place by building on and supporting an historic legacy.

In support of these private and institutional developments, the plan also outlines strategic public improvements and design guidelines that will enhance the public realm. A combination of streetscape improvements and a sufficient and well-managed parking supply are pre-requisites for a successful mixed-use district. Recommendations for improvements to privately owned building façades and storefronts also are included.

The WBDC and the City of Worcester initiated this Master Plan and are dedicated to the implementation of these recommendations. The WBDC's recent purchase of 20 Franklin Street and plans for its transformation illustrate its commitment as champion of the plan. Similarly, the City is committed to necessary improvements through its various programs and initiatives, including street and parking improvements and support for private investment efforts. Both parties will need to work together to attract the necessary institutional users to bring activity to the Downtown.



Aerial view (looking south from over Main Street) of project area, illustrating recommended improvements and development.



The Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts and Francis R. Carroll Plaza.

ACTION AGENDA

The Downtown Worcester Theatre District Master Plan outlines the Action Agenda - guiding principles for the plan - then expands to present detailed plans and recommendations.

The Action Agenda includes the following eight principles:

1. Create a Mixed-Use District Anchored in Institutional Growth
2. Establish an Entertainment Core Linked to Activity Centers & Open Spaces
3. Increase Stock of Market-Rate and Student Housing
4. Attract Private and Institutional Investment
5. Expand District Connections
6. Improve Pedestrian Network of Alleys and Shared Streets
7. Manage and Increase Parking Supply
8. Program for Live, Work, Study and Play

ACTION AGENDA



Proposed project area land uses, illustrating mixed-use concept.

1. Create a Mixed-Use District Anchored in Institutional Growth

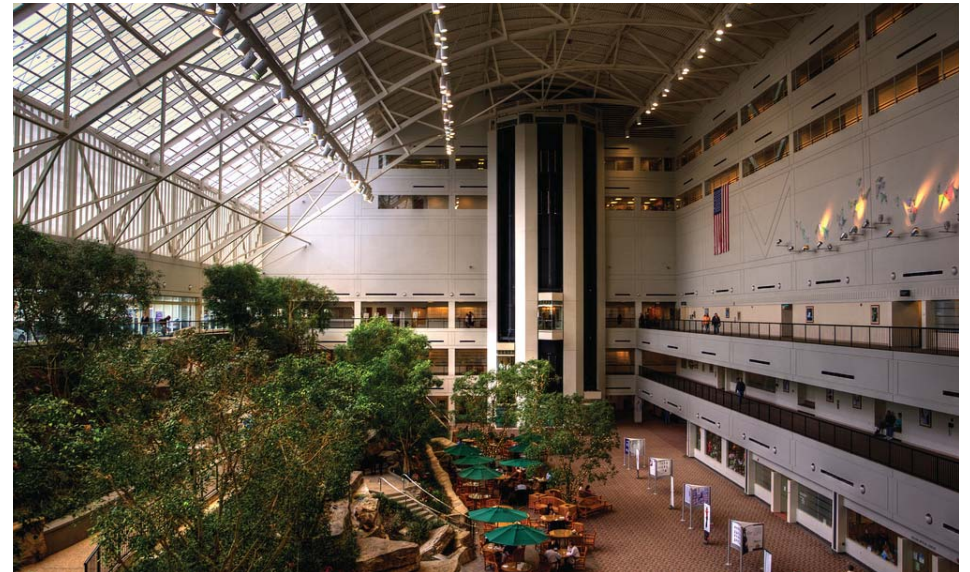
Worcester's many colleges and universities have increasingly become the stabilizing force and a source of economic growth in the region. Within the past ten years, Worcester's Downtown has grown exponentially through the extension of major education and health care institutions such as Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Saint Vincent Hospital/Vanguard, and the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) and Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC) partnership at Gateway Park. Given their prominence within the community, these institutions will continue to play an extensive role in Downtown revitalization. Moreover, the Colleges of Worcester Consortium, Inc. has recognized the importance of institutional involvement in the Downtown and has encouraged new collaborations to promote off-campus collegiate activity, including connections with the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, the WOO Bus/City Ride, and the Taste of Shrewsbury Street.

This Plan identifies additional opportunities for institutions within the study area. The District has the foundations to support institutional expansion, the growing demand for residential units for young professionals and graduate students, and restaurant and entertainment options. Near-term growth should focus on enhancing the existing institutions and expanding their potential within Downtown, through provision of area amenities (restaurants, cafes, bookstores, entertainment venues, fitness centers, daycare services and educational opportunities), as well as potential shared facilities that could serve a collection of institutions at reduced cost.

The Downtown should provide the range of amenities to serve as a true neighborhood - and 18- to 24-hour district supporting all who live, work and play within the area. Local businesses, organically grown based on the needs of Worcester, and entrepreneurs should be encouraged to expand/start a business in the District that would satisfy the demands of a diverse, growing population. With unparalleled access to a transportation network including consistent sidewalk connections as well as road and rail public transit service at City Hall and Union Station, the Theatre District can serve local residents and beyond.



Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS), Worcester Campus.



St. Vincent Hospital, Courtesy of Flickr.com.

2. Establish an Entertainment Core Linked to Activity Centers and Open Spaces

Increasingly, businesses and institutions are finding their prospective employees and students want to be located close to entertainment and retail districts where they can socialize and recreate after work and school, and close to residential opportunities where they can live an active and social lifestyle without getting into a car. The Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, together with the increased programming of the Worcester Common, creates a strong anchor for establishing an entertainment district with restaurants, bars, arts venues and other entertainment options - such as billiards and bowling - that together create the synergy for an active entertainment district bringing new life to Downtown Worcester.

Main Street is Downtown Worcester's historic thoroughfare, and offers limited existing retail and restaurant opportunity. Front Street, too, is an important connector in Downtown Worcester and (with the completion of the Front Street extension as part of the CitySquare project) serves as the key link between Main Street and Union Station – Worcester's expanding intermodal hub. Most of the buildings on Main Street and Front Street contain ground-floor spaces that once held pedestrian-oriented retail activity. The Master Plan calls for re-invigorating that retail space by relocating office uses to upper floors, placing publicly-accessible uses (restaurants, retail, cultural venues) along Main Street, creating transparent ground-floor storefronts including larger windows and doors (without security grates), improved signage, and attractive lighting for a nighttime presence. In properties where ground-floor activity is necessarily limited, the Worcester Windows program should be used to activate existing window areas with art and creative expression. A key element of the activation effort is establishing diverse uses that serve the range of Downtown visitors including residents, business people, and evening and

weekend tourists drawn to one of Worcester's cultural amenities or events. Restaurants and retail must be of a caliber and price range to compete against internal cafeterias and alternatives within driving-range.



Illustrative Master Plan with Federal Street Entertainment Core outlined in blue and links to other activity centers and open spaces shown in pink.

Special Opportunity Area

While Main Street and Front Street offer existing opportunities, Federal Street provides a unique new opportunity. Federal Street, adjacent to the Hanover Theater for the Performing Arts and bordered in large part by property controlled by partner WBDC, contains the potential to create a two-sided, pedestrian corridor between the Worcester Public Library and the residential community around Portland Street, as well as Main Street's cultural and commercial opportunities. For several reasons, Federal Street provides an ideal connection – a central place to begin generating a daytime and nighttime draw that leverages the varied surrounding investments.

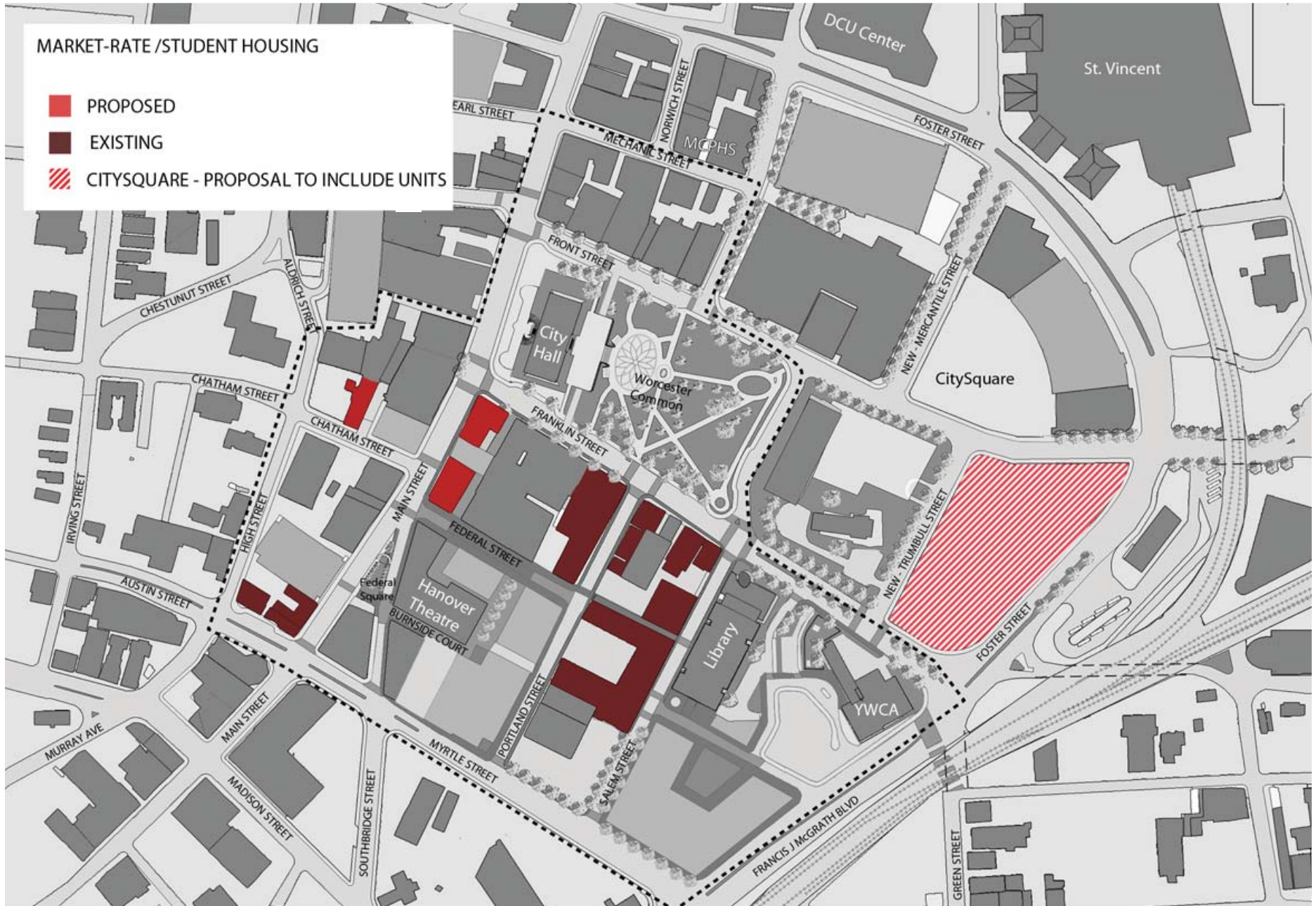
- WBDC controls over half of the frontage along the street, allowing the organization to guide both redevelopment and new development along the street.
- Federal Street is the only street in the District that, similar to examples in Louisville, KY, and Cleveland, OH, can become a two-sided pedestrian mall driven by restaurant and retail activity.
- The scale of the street, and the buildings at both ends, create a degree of intimacy and sense of closure – that is, an outdoor room.
- Federal Street is within approximately 100 feet of the exit of both the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts and a new performance space and conference center proposed for a portion of 20 Federal Street, making it an attractive and convenient pre- and post-theater destination.

Linking this new entertainment core with surrounding activity centers and open spaces will help to establish a strong entertainment district and create a synergy among all of these resources, including the theaters, Federal Square and Main Street, Worcester Common, CitySquare, DCU Center, and new development along Federal Street and at the City-owned Francis J. McGrath Municipal Public Parking Lot.



4th Street in Cleveland, OH (top) and Louisville, KY (below) has been converted to similar pedestrian-focused entertainment districts.

ACTION AGENDA



Proposed locations for market rate and/or student housing.
6 | Downtown Worcester Theatre District Master Plan

3. Increase Stock of Market-Rate and Student Housing

In the last decade, one of the most significant developments in Downtown Worcester has been the addition of a substantial block of market-rate housing as well as a promise of more units to come. New residential developments which introduced 430 units between 2005 and 2012, have reached full occupancy and carry a wait list. CitySquare includes plans for housing – up to 300 units in a later phase of development.

Further increasing the number of occupied market-rate residences is a critical component of a successful revitalization for Downtown Worcester. The market study found that in addition to the 430 units, an additional 600 to 800 market-rate units are needed to create an environment where retail can flourish. Worcester has the good fortune to have several buildings downtown that are appropriate for housing and could either be converted or updated for this purpose.

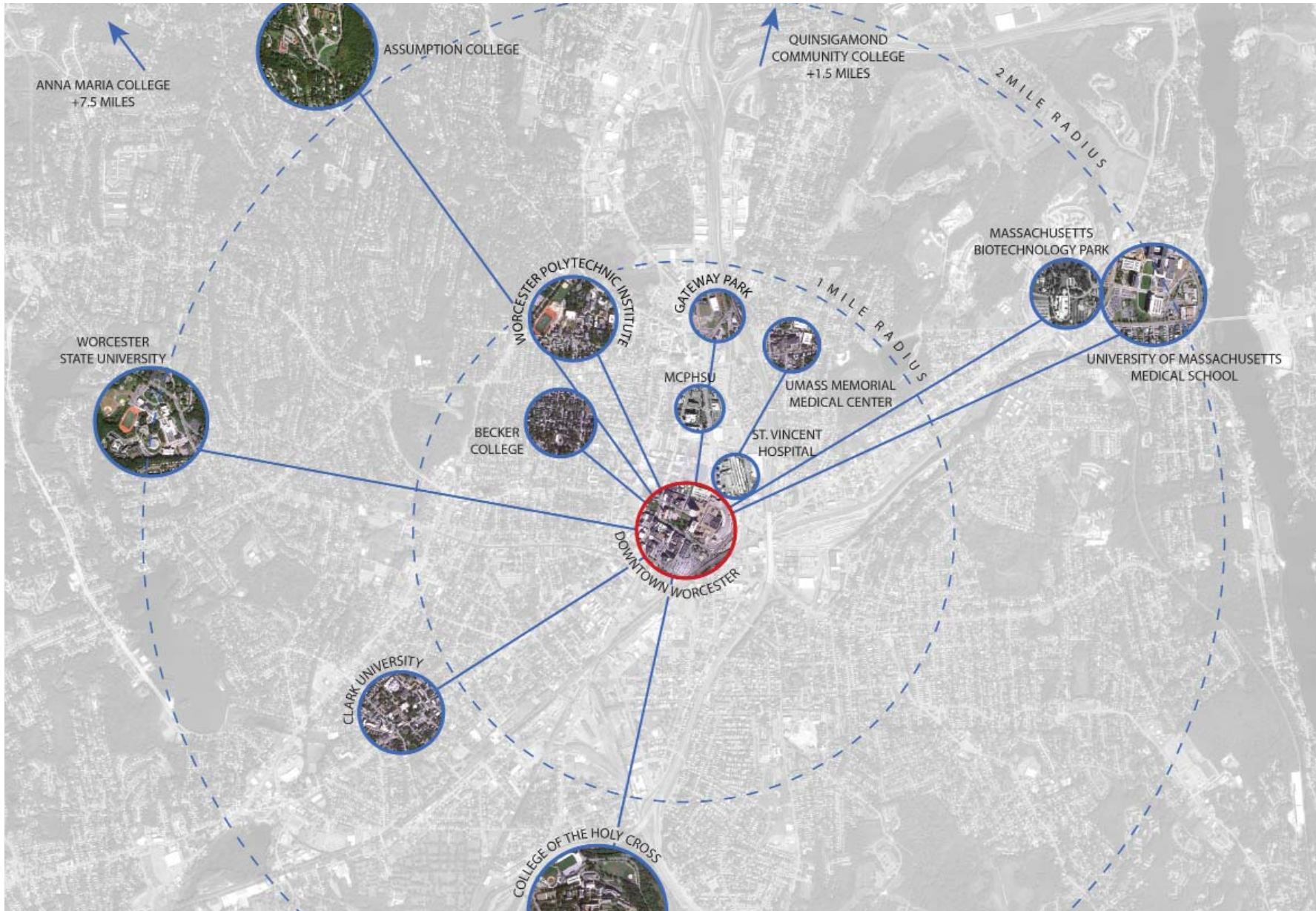
As institutions such as St. Vincent and MCPHS flourish downtown, there are opportunities for partnerships with private developers to create housing for students and staff. Converting existing buildings to market-rate residential units - of a size, variety and cost appealing to these new residents - will serve as a competitive advantage for Worcester-based institutions and businesses when recruiting and retaining talented staff. Residential units should include artist living spaces and urban lofts, as well as more traditional units.

While the focus is on opportunities for housing that addresses the needs of young professionals and Downtown workers, the Plan recognizes the need to ensure that Downtown Worcester remain accessible to people of all incomes. As new housing is brought online, the City should continue its discussions about including deed-restricted units, similar to those underway at Voke Lofts in nearby Gateway Park, as part of an overall housing strategy.



Residential buildings in Downtown Worcester.

ACTION AGENDA



Downtown Worcester is in close proximity to a number of Worcester academic institutions.

4. Attract Private and Institutional Investment

Continued institutional investment in Downtown will help to create a stable foundation for additional private investment. A prime example of this can be seen in the expansion of the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences as well as the construction of the Gateway Park project. New residential interest in Downtown properties is a direct result of expansion at these projects as well as CitySquare. Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences continues its expansion, and may double its student body in the next five years. Other academic and cultural institutions in the City - including the Ecotarium, Worcester Art Museum, Antiquarian Society, etc. - are also expanding. Maintaining cooperative relationships with these institutions will help to increase the opportunities for new Downtown programming and development.

Private investment in new housing and related amenities is an important need in the area. A significant portion of Downtown Worcester property has seen new investment and renovation over the last decade – a strong indication of the growing interest in the marketplace and an acknowledgement of the changing needs of the Downtown Worcester tenant.

The WBDC intends to rehabilitate 20 Franklin Street and reposition it for use as an academic and business innovation center. The CitySquare project continues its efforts to create new, build-to-suit Class A office space, housing, and retail in a mixed-use setting. Surrounding both of these properties are several buildings that could be targeted for uses that are complementary to these mixed-use developments.



Rendering of Unum building in CitySquare. Photo courtesy of CitySquare and the City of Worcester.



Gateway Park, photo courtesy of WBDC.

ACTION AGENDA



Diagram of assets and primary circulation routes, proposed. Aerial photo courtesy of Stephen Mita.

5. Expand District Connections

The legacy of the 1960s downtown Urban Renewal Project for the Worcester Center and Galleria Mall was the creation of a superblock that eliminated the small scale grid of city streets. Today, the CitySquare development reintroduces many of these lost streets and reconnects important Downtown anchors to CitySquare, Union Station, and Saint Vincent Hospital. Expanded connections between the Theatre District and other Downtown destinations will also include a number of improved pedestrian connections, including enhanced pedestrian connections linking the District to Worcester Common and across to the Front Street corridor. Improvements to Commercial Street will extend this connection to the DCU Center, while a redevelopment of the Midtown Mall into a cultural economy incubator and activity center would extend this connection through to Mechanic Street and the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences campus. Building on the Federal Street Special Opportunity Area, the Master Plan proposes a new pedestrian connection through the Portland Street Lofts, extending the Federal Street pedestrian arcade to Salem Street and the Worcester Public Library, YWCA, and development opportunity at the Francis J. McGrath Municipal Parking Lot. This integrates into the District the significant activity along Salem Street, which currently sits isolated by the superblock bounded by Franklin, Portland, Salem, and Myrtle Streets. The pedestrian arcade would link Worcester Public Library patrons into the budding Federal Street corridor and provide attractive and inviting links between the Theatre District and rest of Downtown Worcester. Importantly, as mentioned, the area connections should link the Theatre District to City Hall and Union Station and the unparalleled available road and rail public transit service.

The implementation of streetscape design guidelines for wayfinding, street and sidewalk conditions, and façade improvements will distinguish and unify the District and provide property owners with incentives to assist them in activating the street and creating a more comfortable, pedestrian-friendly experience for the Downtown. The City of Worcester has established a Streetscape Policy and Urban Design Guidelines that can be found at www.worcestermass.org.



1939 Photograph of Downtown Worcester showing extension of Front Street to Union Station, before the superblock. Photo courtesy of WBDC.

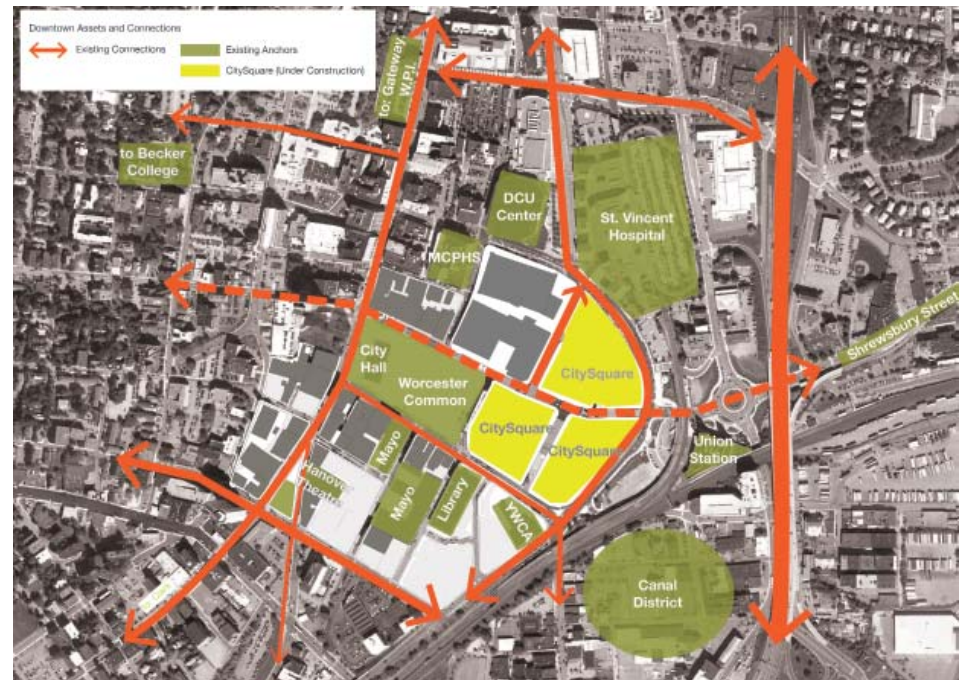
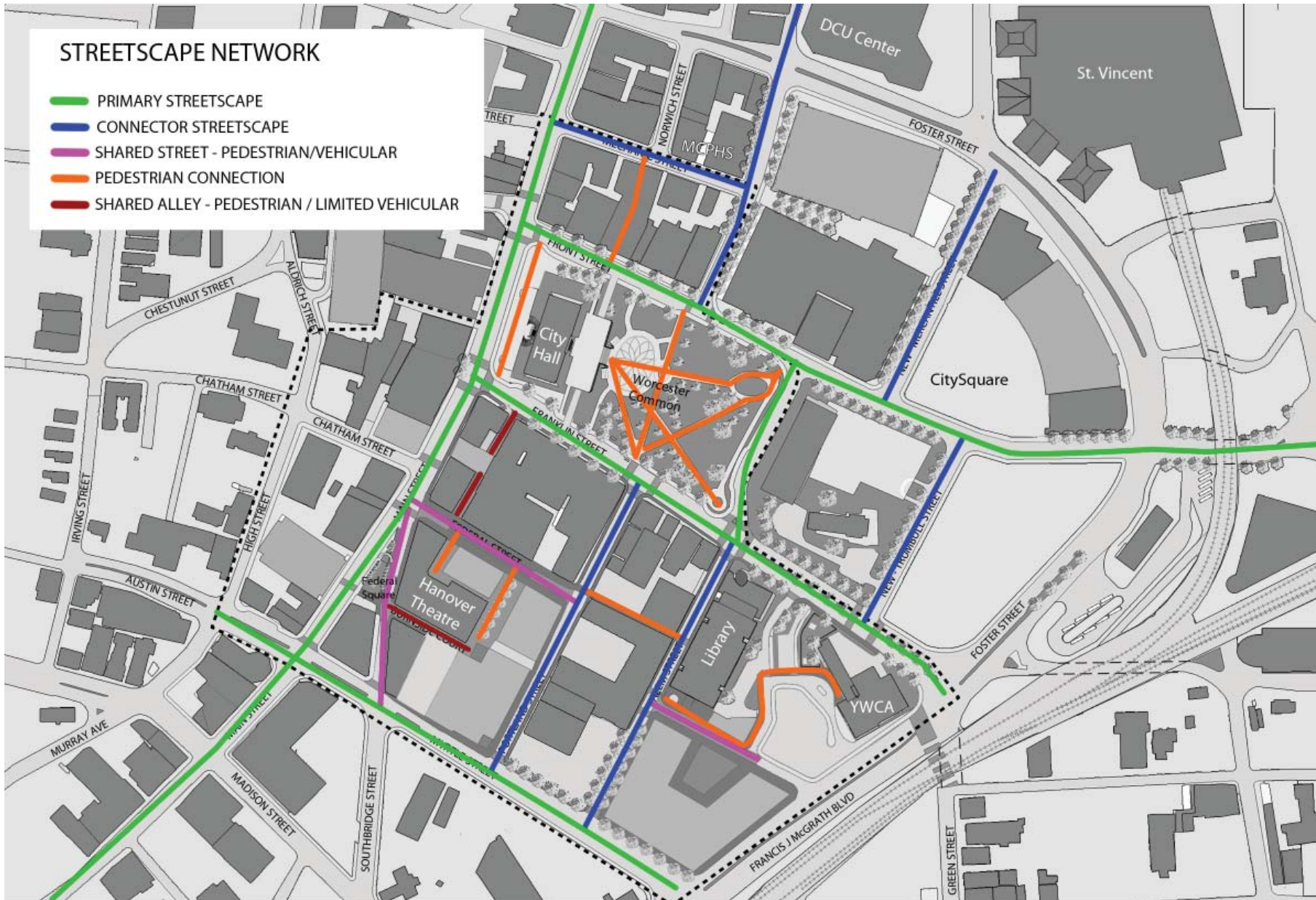


Diagram of existing assets and primary circulation routes (photo courtesy of Stephen Mita).



Proposed streetscape and pedestrian network.

6. Create a District Identity and Improve the Pedestrian Network of Plazas, Alleys and Shared Streets

The Theatre District should have a strong identity to reinforce its status as an important Downtown destination. In addition to the mix of uses within the District, the look and character of the pedestrian environment and buildings will play a key role in creating that identity. Downtown Worcester has a distinct system of alleys and urban passageways throughout the Central Business District. Unique spaces such as Allen Court, Burnside Court, and the indoor pedestrian passageway of the Midtown Mall provide an opportunity for increased pedestrian connectivity and programming. The alleys considered as part of this Master Plan are intimate in scale, architecturally enticing, and primarily privately owned. With cooperative owners comes greater capacity to improve, manage and control the space.

Great pedestrian routes, streets and alleys included, encourage walking, support street-level economic activity, and reduce the need for immediate parking adjacencies. They support downtown businesses and institutions by creating a more convenient and cohesive environment – a place where people want to be. Several existing downtown pedestrian routes and plazas will be improved, others will be reinforced by way of an extended street grid, and new ones will be created to enhance connectivity, street level activity and the pedestrian experience.

While Downtown has remarkably fewer safety issues than cities of similar size, the perception of safety is an important consideration to support the District's changing identity. Increased residential and commercial pedestrian activity, renewed street-level retail opportunities, and a comprehensive streetscape with adequate lighting will significantly improve the sense of individual safety in the area. This should be supported by a targeted police presence and involvement, both on the road and out on the sidewalk, in the issues that impact the individual experience.



Allen Court from Franklin Street - existing conditions.



Rendering of proposed improvements to Allen Court.

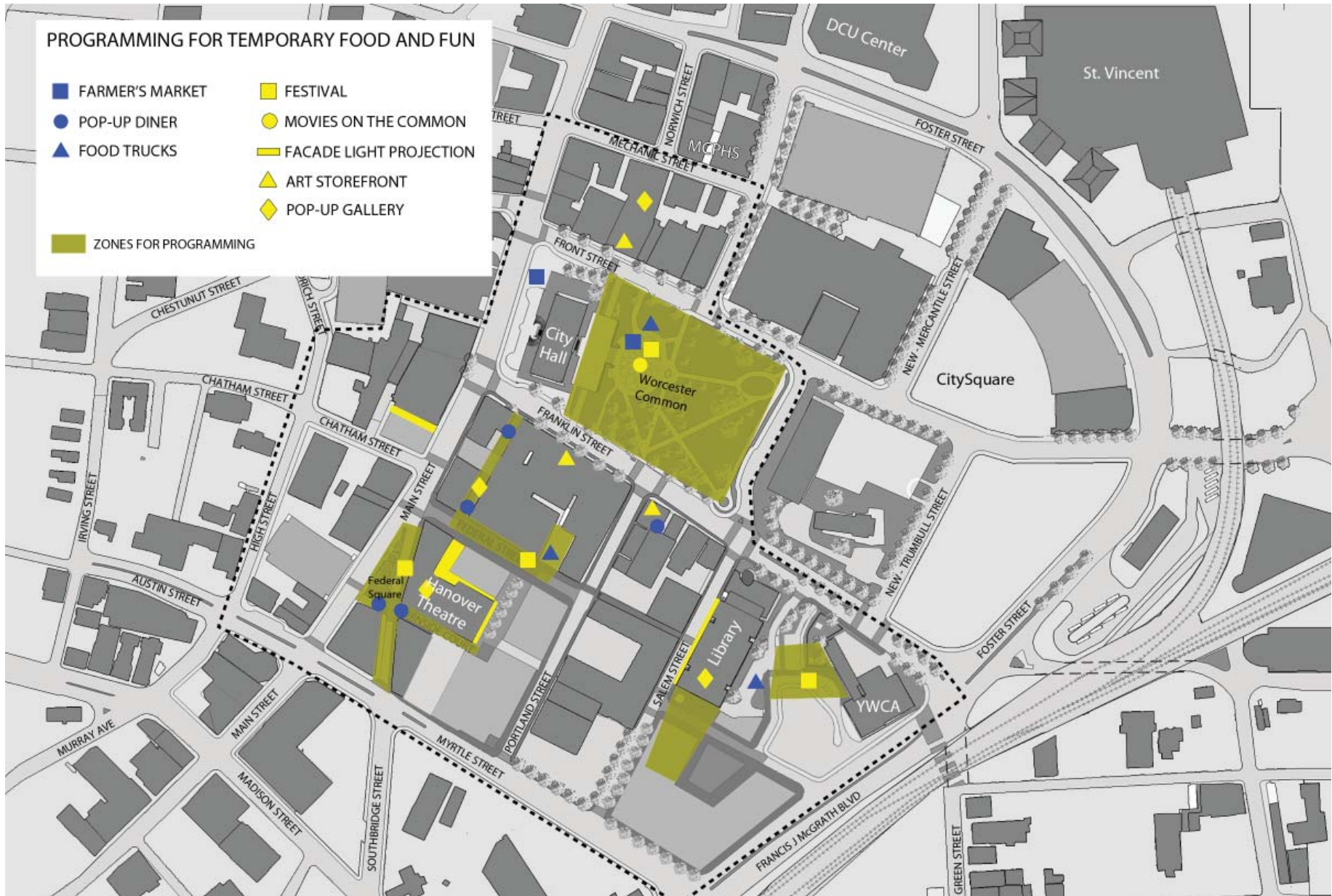
7. Manage and Increase Parking Supply

Within Worcester's Central Business District there are seven public parking structures, providing 3,830 parking spaces to employees, visitors and residents within the Downtown. Even with the proximity and availability of parking within the area, the perception of the lack of convenient and affordable parking is one of the key issues for downtown Worcester residents and businesses alike. With the WBDC's redevelopment of 20 Franklin Street, as well as other private investments being made Downtown, the demand for parking will increase. As part of its redevelopment plans, the WBDC is looking at the potential for constructing a new parking garage on the former T&G parking lot. The full buildout for CitySquare includes an underground garage that will hold approximately 500 vehicles. In the near-term, it is necessary to manage the existing parking and maximize the number of on-street and surface spaces located within the downtown core. The Master Plan recommends the consideration of increasing on-street parking options through the creation of diagonal parking where appropriate. Additionally, the Master Plan recommends consideration of a comprehensive digital signage program to connect visitors to available parking throughout the Downtown. Equivalent "smart parking" programs are used by cities across the globe to manage demand by directing drivers to the nearest available public supply. In the near-term, some surface parking lots will remain operational and will be properly managed and landscaped. Each of these efforts will improve the public perception of the availability of parking.



T&G surface parking lot surrounding the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, with Federal Plaza Parking Garage across Main Street, beyond.

ACTION AGENDA



Downtown areas to program with food related uses and temporary festivals and farmer's markets.

8. Program for Work, Live, Study and Play

With a strategic plan in place, the ability to create a lively District for Worcester businesses, visitors and residents to work, live, study, and play becomes a greater reality. Expanded institutional and residential uses are integral to this effort. Downtowns focused solely on commercial activities are only active between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm. The growing list of events held on Worcester Common, at the DCU Center and Arena, Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, Mechanics Hall and in the various Downtown entertainment venues contribute to Downtown vibrancy, but there is room to leverage and build on these activities. As referenced earlier, one component of the Master Plan is consideration of the creation of a performance space and conference space at 20 Franklin Street. Fronting on Main Street, such a theater would increase the level of nighttime activity and options around the Theatre District area. Given the Master Plan's associated Market Study's indication that the greatest potential for growth lies in institutional expansion and ancillary uses, restaurant and retail growth should cater to this population. Development of uses such as an urban supermarket which cater to residents' daily needs also would increase the attractiveness of the area to potential residents. The Master Plan recognizes a need for one "tablecloth" restaurant to satisfy the palette of both business lunches and theater patrons, but the larger share of demand will be for fast, fresh food options. Given hesitancies in long-term investments required for start-ups, a good first step would be to expand the temporary entertainment and food programs to test the market with reduced risk.

The Master Plan proposes the use of the public and semi-public spaces throughout the Downtown core as potential hubs of activity, utilizing programming such as festivals, farmers' markets, outdoor summer movies, concerts, winter ice skating, public art/light installations, temporary vendors, and food trucks. This programming could be sponsored by collaborative efforts between the City, the Worcester Cultural Coalition, the Downtown Neighborhood Association, and other private parties, helping to build momentum and create a destination for food, fun and activity. The level of success of these temporary programs will indicate the potential demand for arts-related retail and entertainment uses and the most desirable locations. It is recommended that the growth of these uses lead eventually to the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) and/or partnerships to support comprehensive programming and enhancements within the District.



Bring food trucks, like the Dogfather, to several Downtown locations.



Expand the Worcester Farmer's Market in the Worcester Common.

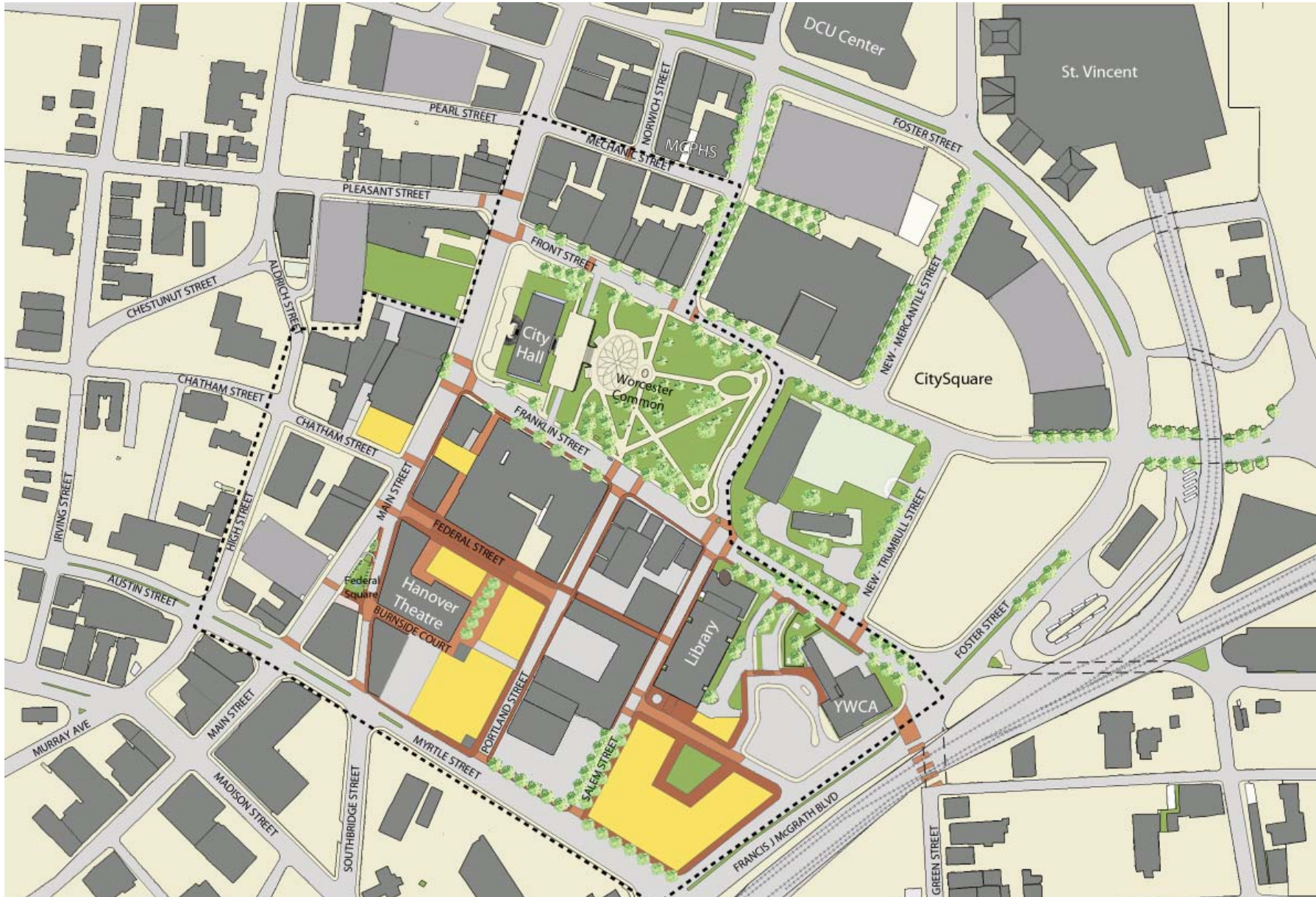


Continue the successful Movies on the Common program.

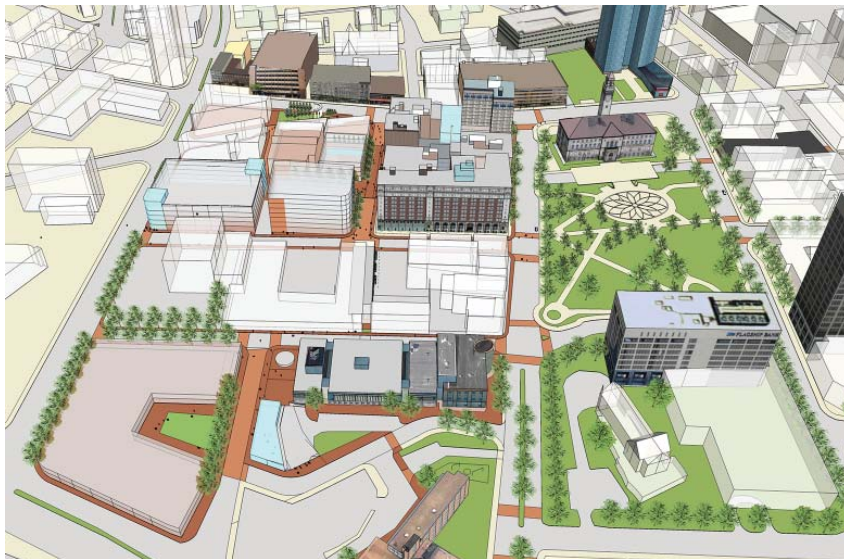


Encourage more festivals to locate in the Worcester Common.

A number of historic fountains exist within the District, and feasibility of re-starting water flows could be explored.



Proposed Master Plan, with new buildings highlighted in yellow.

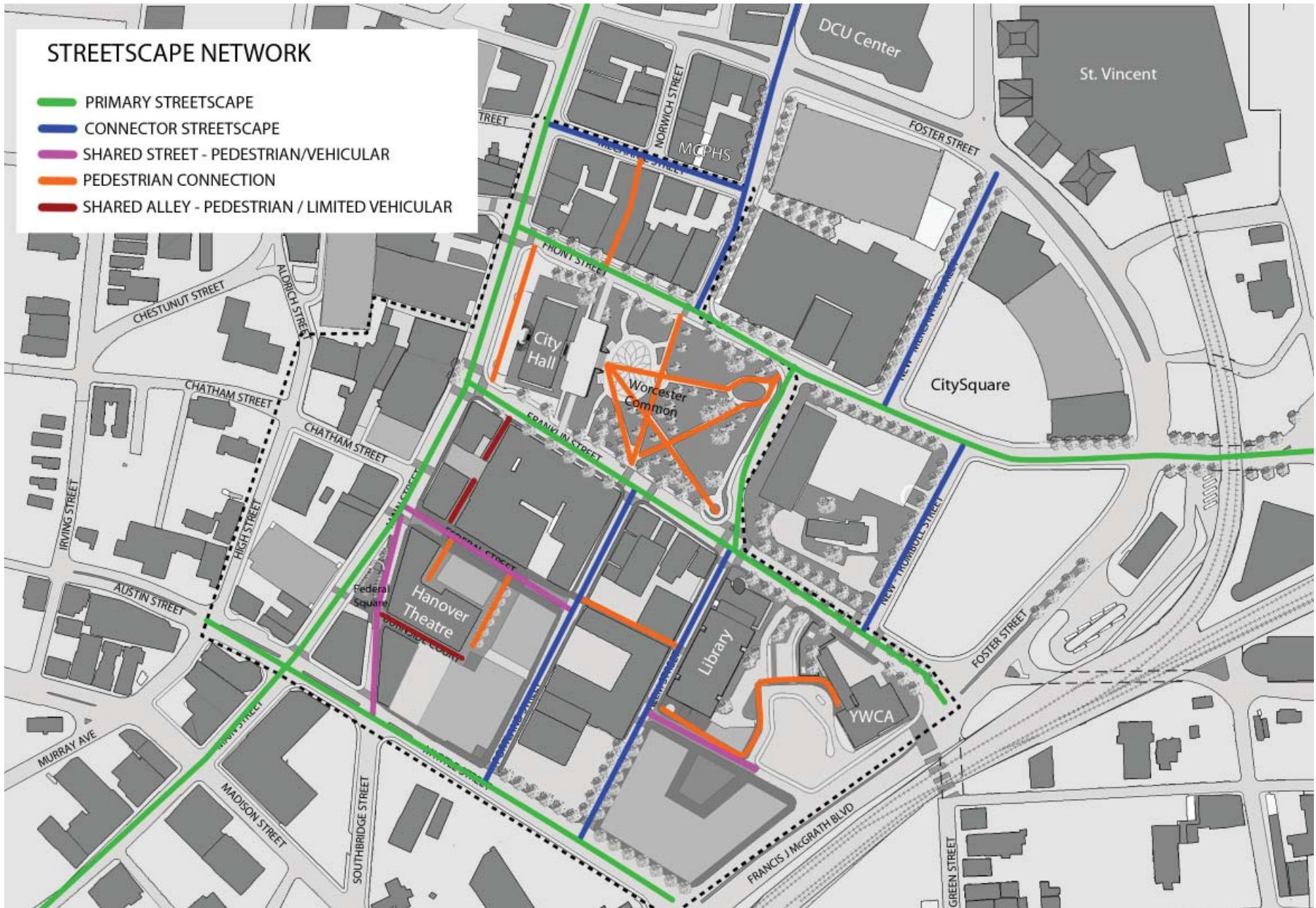


Aerial views of project area looking south over Main Street (top) and north from McGrath Boulevard (below), illustrating recommended improvements and development.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Streetscape and Pedestrian Network
- Commercial and Entertainment Corridors: Federal Street Special Opportunity Area
- Primary Development Opportunities:
 - 20 Franklin Street
 - Parking and Development Pad on Former T&G Lot
 - Professional-Oriented Residential in the Park Plaza, Former Filene's and PASOW
 - New Plaza and Development on YWCA and Worcester Public Library Block
- Streetscape Guidelines
- Parking
- Building Façades
- Programming Options for the Downtown
- Secondary Development Opportunities

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



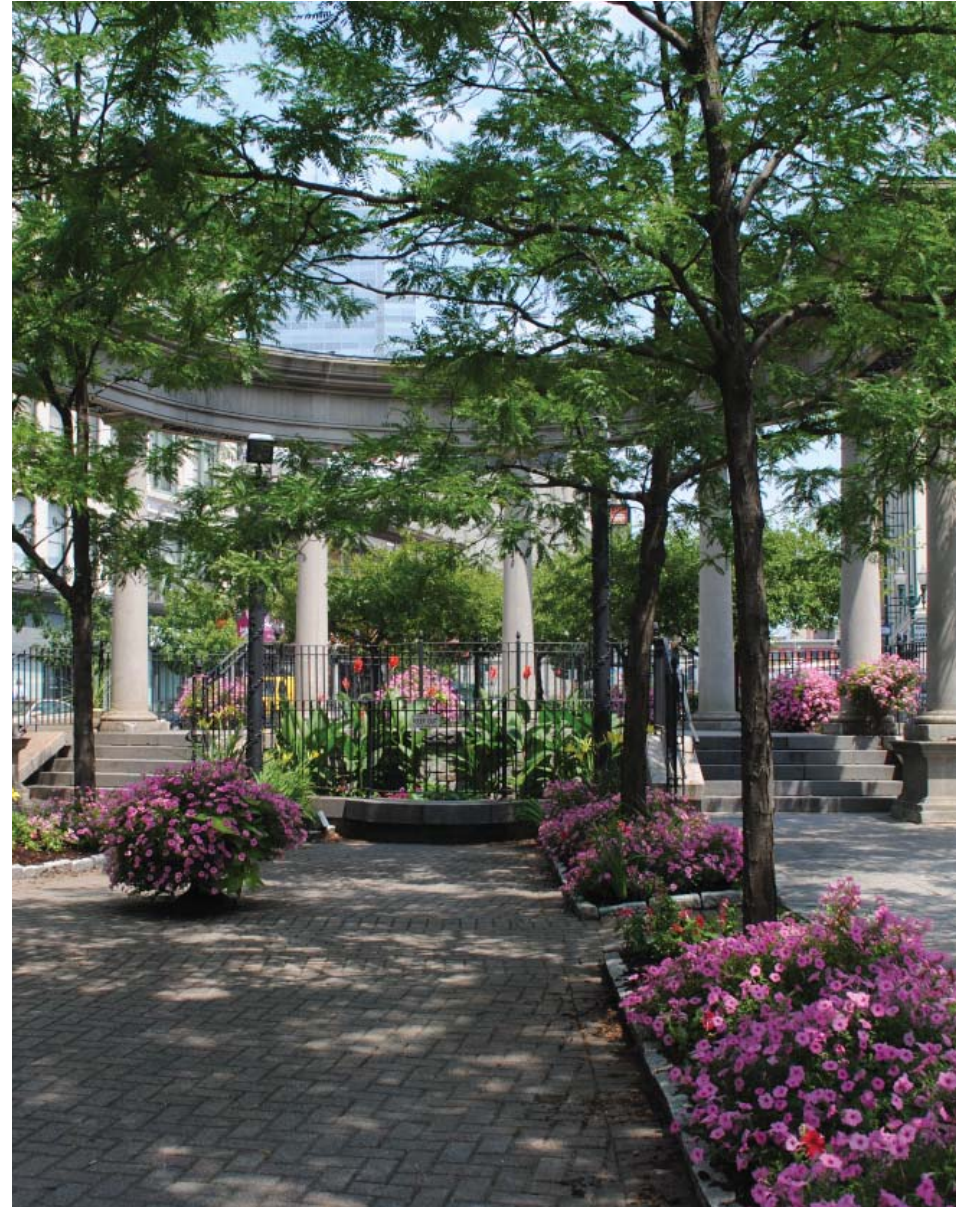
Proposed streetscape network.

Streetscape and Pedestrian Network

The existing streetscape and pedestrian networks in the study area vary greatly in their ability to convey a sense of place and identity for the Downtown. This leads to challenges in being able to project and promote a sense of clarity for the District and feeling of safety and security for visitors, business owners and employees, and residents.

Improvements need to be a coordinated effort which creates a detailed and cohesive streetscape and enhanced connectivity. While the existing city sidewalk network offers reasonable physical connectivity within the District, there are opportunities at three different scales to improve it. The first is to find opportunities for connection within the existing blocks, including the creation of new pedestrian links throughout the District, including the proposed Federal Street entertainment core and other destinations. Improving connectivity to and encouraging frequent use of the key entertainment and activity destinations, as well as key open spaces in the Downtown will improve the experience of the District overall. The second is to capitalize on the future development of CitySquare and the improved reduced scale of the street grid that can result from the development. The third is to take advantage of the existing network of alleys within the District: the clarification of the pedestrian network with the YWCA and Worcester Public Library block creates better open spaces and identity for the existing institutions.

Improvements to the streetscape and pedestrian network include both the introduction of new connections as well as streetscape improvements.



The Francis R. Carroll Plaza at Main and Southbridge Streets.

New Connections

Federal Street

While Main Street, Front Street, and other major thoroughfares will continue to serve their traditional roles as centers for transportation and economic activity, Federal Street will have a new focus as a major pedestrian spine and as a new public plaza, lined with ground floor retail and entertainment uses. Two new connections are proposed for the former Telegram & Gazette parking lot: a plaza connecting a new parking garage with Federal Street and a pedestrian path connecting the exit door on the north side of the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts with Federal Street. The plaza provides a gathering space and the opportunity for outdoor tables to serve adjacent restaurants. The plaza and new development on the two development pads on the former T & G parking lot will contribute greatly to the vibrancy of the street. Federal Street will operate as a pedestrian plaza. Delivery trucks will be able to access the driveways at both ends of the block at all times, and may use the entire street for off-hour (early morning) deliveries. While the basic streetscape will meet the City's Streetscape Policy, Federal Street offers a public-private partnership opportunity among the City, the WBDC, and other adjacent property owners to share the design, development, management, and maintenance of the space. Depending on the time of day, Federal Street could be an active City connector street, a pedestrian mall, or an outdoor performance space. The design of this development opportunity should be carefully considered to accommodate the proposed mix of uses and needs with a manageable and cost-effective approach.

A second new pedestrian connection is shown extending from the eastern end of Federal Street across Portland Street and through the current two-story garage space of the Portland Street Lofts to Salem Street, providing access to the Worcester Public Library, YWCA and proposed new development on the McGrath Municipal Parking Lot, incorporating these active uses into the entertainment core of the District. This connection can be made by removing a row of ground floor parking in the garage and opening the north wall and possibly the ceiling of



Proposed new connections from Federal Street to the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, the proposed new garage and Salem Street.



4th Street in Cleveland, OH - a precedent for the proposed entertainment core on Federal Street.

that portion of the garage. The pedestrian path, which will require removing one residential unit at the ground floor, will cross under a second floor residential unit to emerge onto Salem Street. The new path joins Salem Street across from the Salem Street entrance to the library. Currently, the stairs from Salem Street to the portico along the western Library façade are located north of the entrance door. Moving the stairs to line up more directly with the door would provide a direct link from Federal Street to the Library. The second floor façade of the Portland Street garage is blank, with no windows, providing a perfect location for signage or banners directing pedestrians through the new link to Salem Street. The branding of this route – a “Worcester Creative Corridor” or some similar appellation with unique signage and public art – will make this an attractive destination and create a true sense of place along the corridor.



Interior view of proposed Federal Street connection from Portland Street to Salem Street, through the Portland Street Lofts garage (see location diagram at left).



The use of colorful umbrellas creatively enlivens this pedestrian walkway in Portugal; other creative techniques should be used for the proposed walkway illustrated at right.



Exterior view (from Portland Street) of proposed connection through the Portland Street Lofts garage.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Other Connections

A series of new crosswalks and well-defined pedestrian routes will improve or create the following connections:

- Main Street from Federal Square toward Lincoln Square/Gateway Park to the north as well as south toward Main South, improving connections to Mechanics Hall, The Palladium, Tuckerman Hall, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Becker College and Clark University.
- Front Street from Main Street to Union Station and Washington Square, as well as toward Pleasant Street and points west, improving connections to the bus and rail transportation alternatives as well as the restaurants of Shrewsbury Street and the East Side as well as the historic neighborhoods and entertainment venues of the Pleasant Street area.
- Franklin Street from Main Street to Green Street and the Canal District, improving connections to the restaurants, retail and nightlife of the Canal District.
- Portland and Salem Streets and across Franklin Street and the Common to:
 - Front Street
 - CitySquare
 - The Midtown Mall and through to the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
 - DCU Convention Center & Arena

Planned improvements for 2013/2014 to Main Street and others within the Downtown area will incorporate many of the above and improve the pedestrian experience within the Theatre District.

Improvements to two private alleyways, Burnside Court and Allen Court, will also create improved pedestrian connections. Burnside Court will provide a direct connection from the new parking garage on the T & G lot to Federal Square and

the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts entrance on Main Street. Allen Court will link the proposed performance space at 20 Franklin Street with Federal Street, and with Franklin Street and the Common.



Proposed view of Burnside Court, adjacent to the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, with feature lighting.

Streetscape Improvements

Primary Streetscape

The Primary Streetscape network is the connection of the major district streets that extend out and create city-wide connections. Primary streetscapes in this document include the Primary and Gateway categories as described in the City of Worcester Urban Design Guidelines and Streetscape Policy. These streets are key district streets with vehicular traffic and sidewalks on both sides and include: Main, Front, Franklin and Myrtle Streets. Their treatment needs to strengthen their status as high visibility gateway connectors into the Downtown. Any opportunity to widen sidewalks in order to improve the pedestrian experience, and to accommodate alternative forms of transportation such as bicycles, should be pursued, particularly on areas of Main Street where space is at a premium.

Overall identity of these Primary Streets should be in keeping with the context of Worcester and the well-established character of the streets around City Hall and the Common.

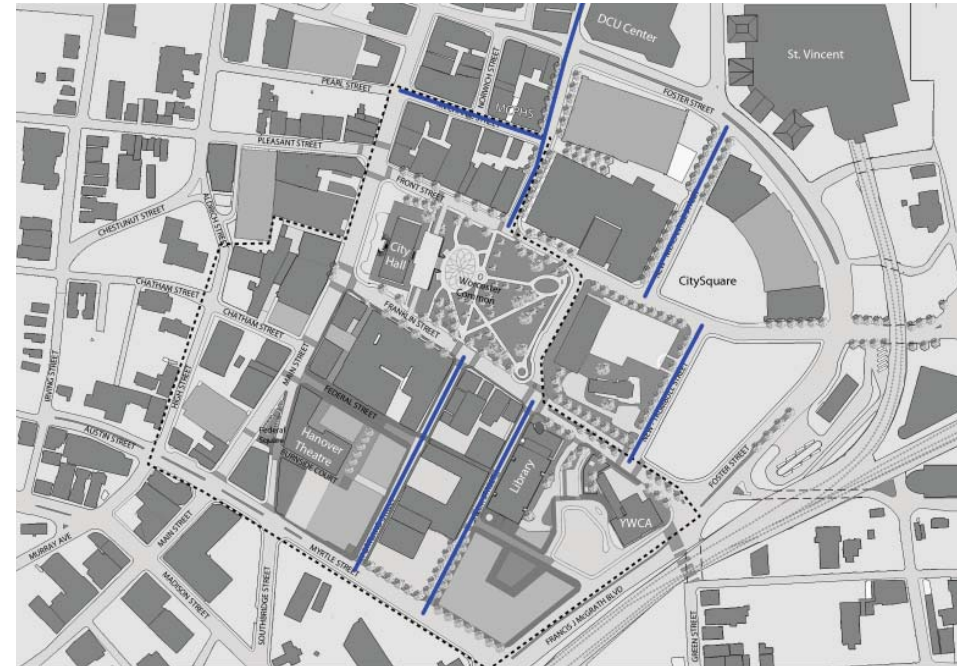


Streets designated as Primary Streets are shown in green above.

Connector Streetscape

The Secondary Streetscape network comprises streets that are important District connectors with vehicular traffic and sidewalks on both sides and include: Portland, Salem, Federal, Commercial, Mechanics and Norwich. Connector Streets in the Master Plan include the Connector and Internal categories of street as described in the City of Worcester Urban Design Guidelines and Streetscape Policy. Their treatment needs to reinforce their role as the roads that set the identity for the District. While the Primary Streetscape's identity is tied to that of the larger City connections, the Secondary roads form the District network. Similar to the Primary Streetscape network, any opportunity to widen sidewalks should be pursued in order to improve the pedestrian experience, particularly at crosswalks.

While the sidewalks in this category are not as wide as in the Primary Streetscape category, there may be some opportunity for a small amount of site furniture to be incorporated according to the City of Worcester Streetscape Policy. In those cases, a contemporary bench and furnishings should be chosen. Similar to the light fixture, the bench should incorporate a nod to the historic nature of the District, however the cultural identity of the District allows for some creative expression. Specific placement of the features should follow the City of Worcester Streetscape Policy.



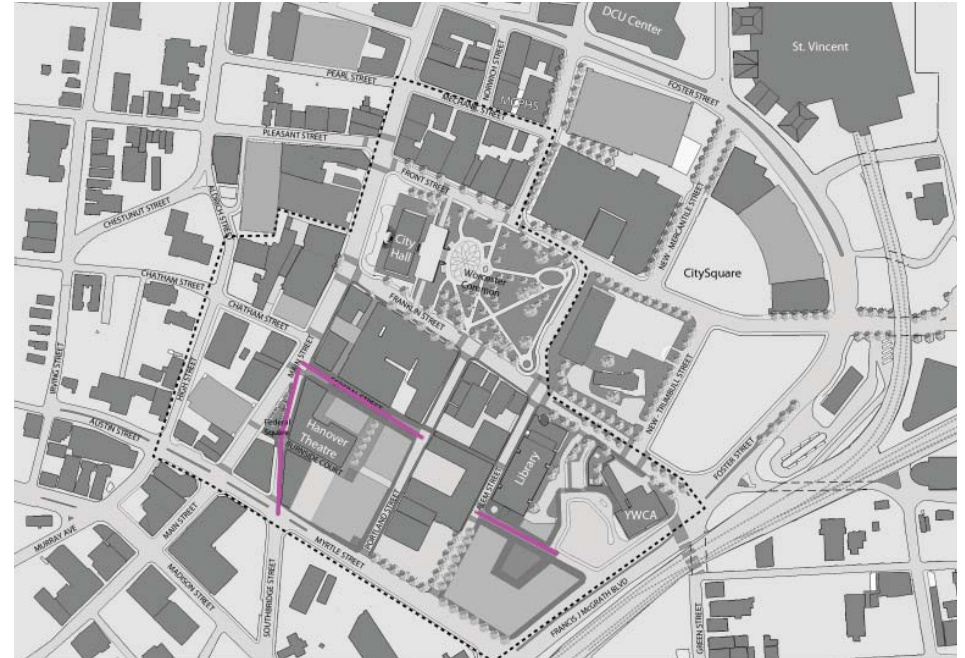
Streets designated as Connector Streets are shown in blue above.

Shared Streets - Pedestrian/Vehicular

Shared Streets are a particular type of street in the Secondary Network which has vehicular traffic and sidewalks on each side, but shifts the priority toward the pedestrian flow. Southbridge and Federal are identified as two potential shared streets. Ideally these roads have a flush curb condition making the typical road bed allocation flush with the height of the sidewalk - in essence making one very broad condition available to pedestrians. The spirit of the shared street includes all modes of transportation and is designed in such a way that vehicles are used in a manner that does not preclude other transportation modes.

In these two cases each would be detailed to be consistent with their adjacent Primary (Southbridge) or Secondary (Federal) status within the network. As an example, Southbridge would have the same style of lighting, furnishings and trees as Main, while Federal would be treated in the manner of the Secondary Network.

Paving on Federal Street should accommodate basic vehicular needs but should also offer a sense of scale for the pedestrian. Recognizing the special opportunity of Federal Street, Federal Street might have alternative paving materials, incorporate sidewalk elements and designs illustrating its celebration of the cultural landscape and place as a “Worcester Creative Corridor” or similar trail system, and include creative street furniture and public art.



Streets designated as Shared Streets are shown in pink above.



Southbridge Street is recommended as a shared street, providing a friendly and safe pedestrian environment in front of the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts.

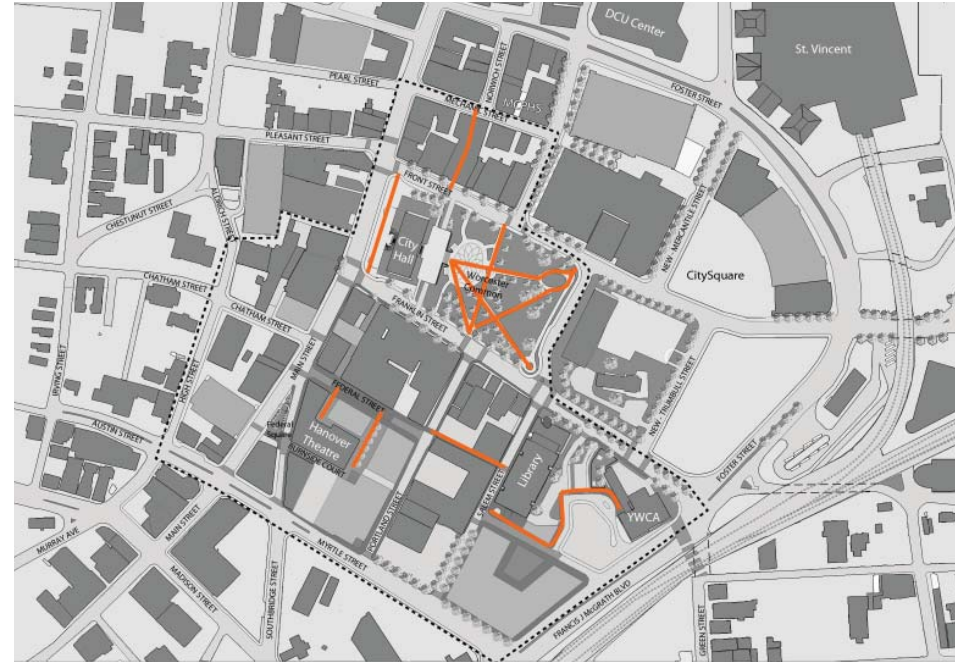
PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pedestrian Connections

The Pedestrian Connections network includes generous pedestrian priority zones which help promote and support ease of pedestrian movement within District blocks. Existing connections to be improved include Burnside Court, Allen Court and Federal Square. Proposed new connections were described earlier, including the connection through the Portland/Salem block, and through the former T&G surface parking lot from the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts and a proposed new parking garage to Federal Street. The identity of each pedestrian connection is linked to its proximity and connectivity to either Primary or Secondary Connections. For example, the sidewalk in front of City Hall or the primary path across the Common connecting Franklin to Front retain their existing identity within their contexts; but locations such as Allen Court or Burnside Court or other inner district pedestrian connections take on an identity more similar to that of the Secondary Network.



A pedestrian connection through an indoor arcade, similar to the Midtown Mall.



Pedestrian Connections are shown in orange above.

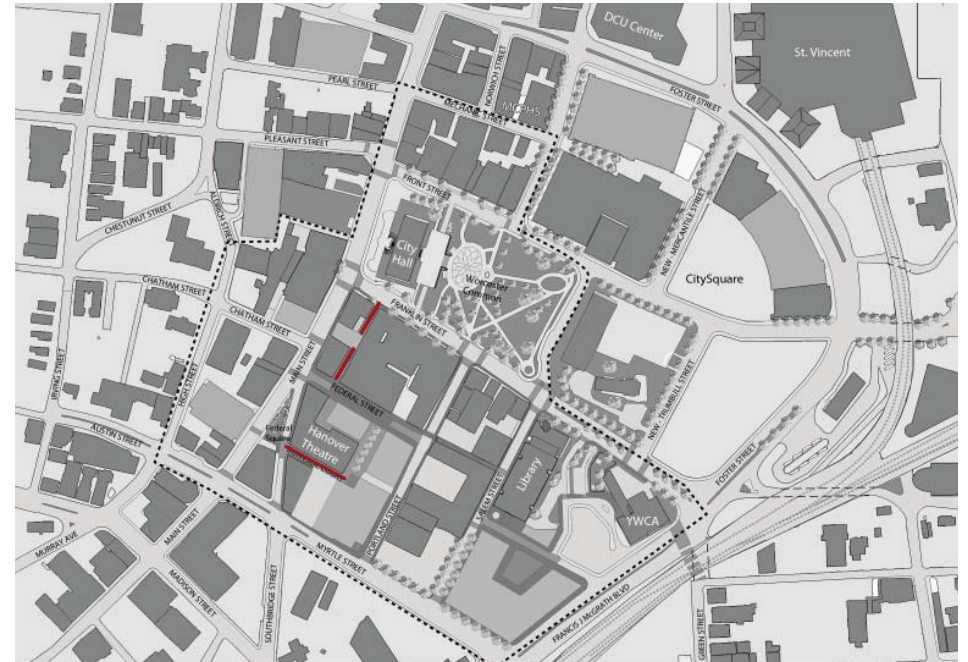


View of a key pedestrian connection through Worcester Common from Front Street.

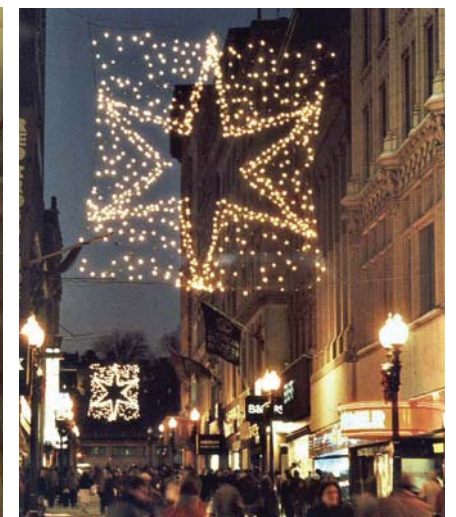
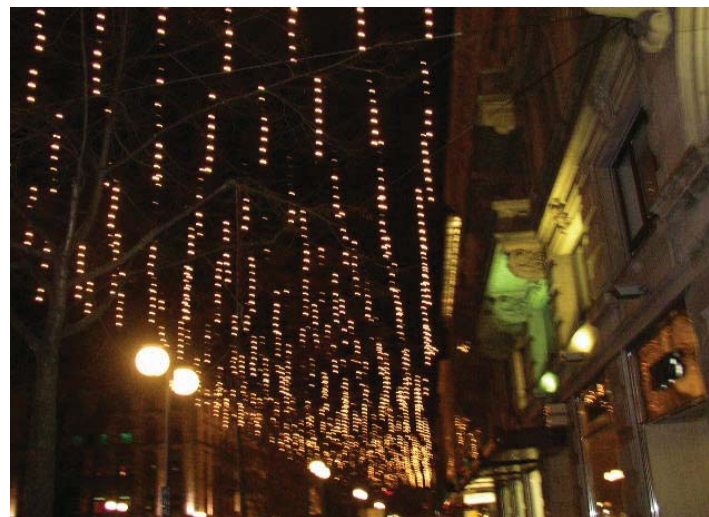
Shared Alley - Pedestrian, Limited Vehicular

The Shared Alley network takes advantage of existing alleys which are currently only thought of as service areas and do not feel welcoming to pedestrians. Burnside Court and Allen Court are two considerable alleys in the District that could be leveraged for better use and reinforcement of the District as an active, exciting and interesting part of Worcester. Sidewalks are not used in the alleys to delineate vehicles from pedestrian flow, but rather the entire surface is one pavement and continuous grade with no raised curb. Since alleys are generally privately owned, they offer flexibility for creative expression in a manner not possible on a public street or sidewalk.

Due to the tight conditions and need for access from very large vehicles, lighting should be lifted above the ground plane and hung overhead from the buildings. This also opens up a new type of lighting possibility – one that is festive, unique and distinct to the alley network and inviting to pedestrians who are encouraged to use the alley network to move from edge to interior of the District.



Shared Alleys are shown in dark red above.

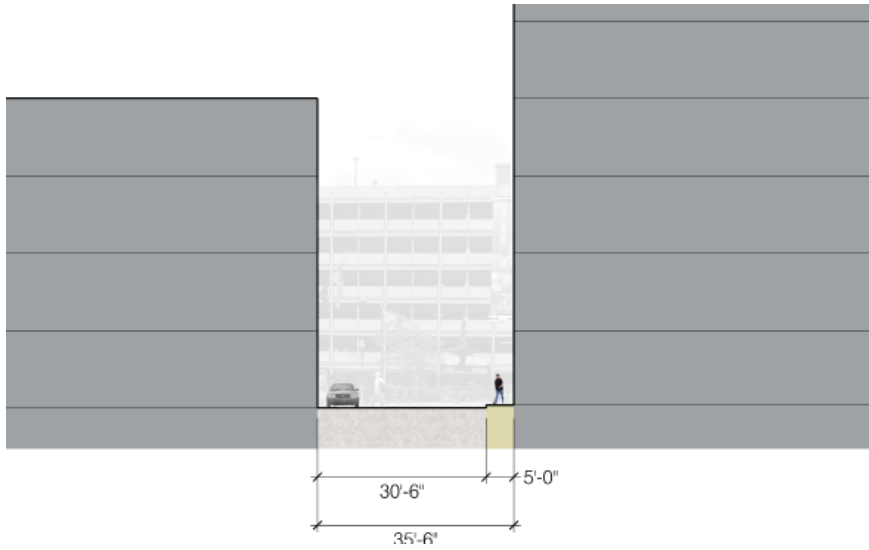


Examples of outdoor overhead lighting enlivening streets.

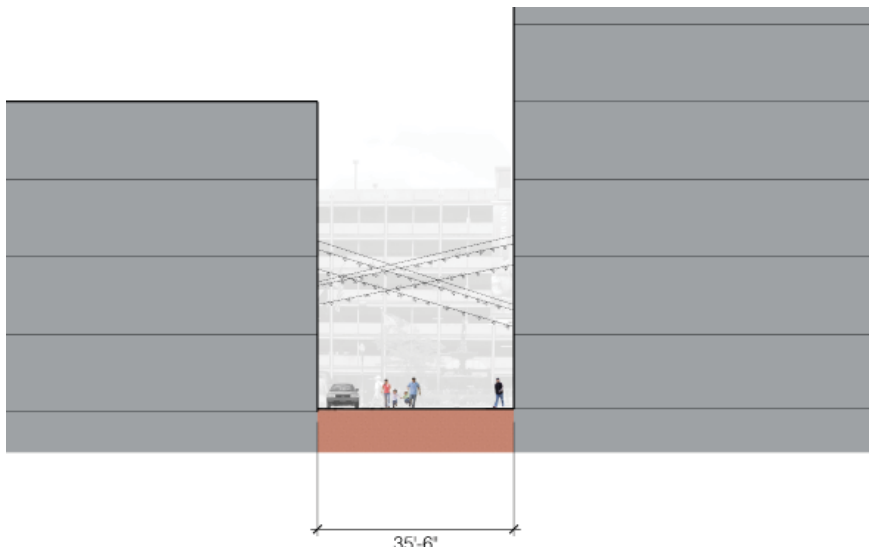
PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BURNSIDE COURT

EXISTING



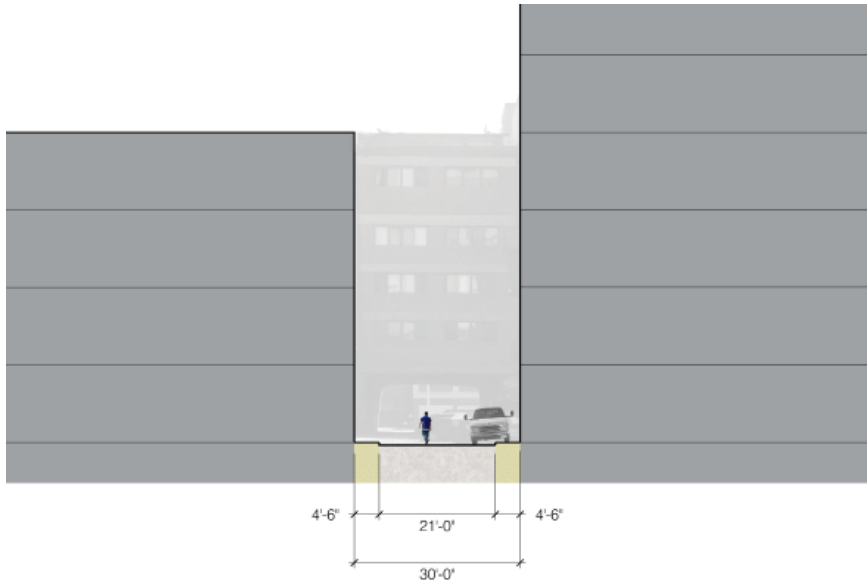
PROPOSED



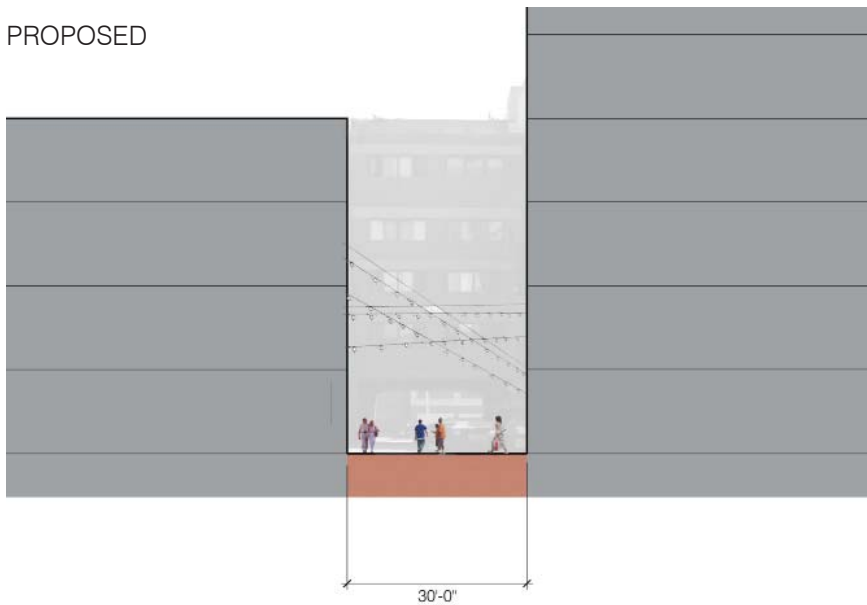
Existing Burnside Court.

ALLEN COURT

EXISTING



PROPOSED



Existing Allen Court.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Wayfinding

Wayfinding is an important tool in urban design as it increases legibility to the urban environment. There is much evidence supporting the claim that employing a graphic identification strategy leads to greater recognition, and consequently use, of urban neighborhoods. The wayfinding elements should be not only functional, but also enhance the aesthetics of the District and reinforce the character and identity of place.

Symbols and colors on various forms of signage can create a recognizable identity for neighborhoods, institutions, streets, or public venues or events. The Theatre District in Downtown Worcester is a diverse combination of institutions, businesses, residences and cultural destinations. Wayfinding in this instance can be used as a tool to tie together seemingly unconnected terrains, to create unity within the District. Wayfinding should clearly direct pedestrians and motorists to the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, DCU Center, Worcester Public Library, City Hall, MCPHS, and other district anchors.

The wayfinding system should be consistent with City's existing wayfinding system. While the major components of the system will identify the Theatre District as part of the Downtown District, other pedestrian and business-oriented elements can be developed to more specifically identify the Theatre District, similar to the concept the City illustrated for Highland Street.

It is also recommended that a "Worcester Creative Corridor" or similar creative route be identified with banners and other graphic elements, following the improved pedestrian connections and linking all of the arts and entertainment related destinations within the Theatre District.



An example of Worcester's existing colorful wayfinding system.

Stormwater

In January 2008, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts updated the existing stormwater standards which set five main goals, some of which have relevance to redevelopment projects in particular. In general, the updated standards set forth an agenda that further promotes Low Impact Development (LID) techniques through Best Management Practices (BMPs) in order to increase local recharge and improve the quality of stormwater entering rivers and streams. While the proposed projects in this plan may not trigger these specific standards, this plan recommends consideration and incorporation of stormwater management strategies wherever possible. Impermeable urban environments are the largest contributors to storm water runoff. Any opportunities to reduce quantities of storm water entering the City's stormwater system should be considered wherever possible. This may include the use of permeable pavement systems in the roadbeds to provide infiltration of stormwater back into ground water and thereby reducing quantities entering the piped stormwater system, or stormwater tree pits which can provide opportunities for infiltration, direct watering for street trees, and at a minimum cleaning of the stormwater shedding off the streets prior to entering the stormwater system.



Stormwater tree pit under construction.



Arborflow tree pit.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Plan indicating location of primary development opportunities.

Primary Development Opportunities

In this section, seven strategic opportunity sites within the study area were selected to illustrate the possibilities and potentials of development. The sites selected are either vacant or under-utilized. Each site has the potential to bring a powerful and positive addition to Downtown. These opportunity sites offer the potential to create academic and affiliated office space, housing, restaurants, entertainment and retail - all of which will enhance the potential for the area to flourish and provide jobs and housing within the Downtown. Many offer the opportunity to build on Worcester's historic architecture to position the Theatre District and Worcester's Downtown as a whole for a new economy.

The seven primary development opportunities are:

1. Redevelopment of 20 Franklin Street
 - a. Innovation on Franklin Street
 - b. An Institution on Federal Street
 - c. A Conference Center/Theatre fronting Main Street
2. New Development and Structured Parking on Former Telegram & Gazette Parking Lot
3. Renovation and Redevelopment of Midtown Mall as a Creative Economy Incubator
4. Redevelopment of the Francis J. McGrath Municipal Parking Lot
5. Renovation/Rehabilitation of the Park Plaza
6. Renovation/Restructuring of Former Filene's Building as Student-Focused Housing
7. Redevelopment of the PASOW Building as Market-Rate Housing

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



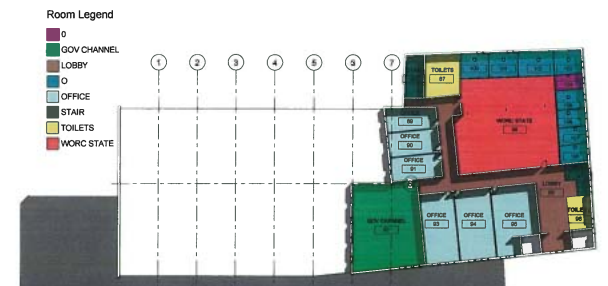
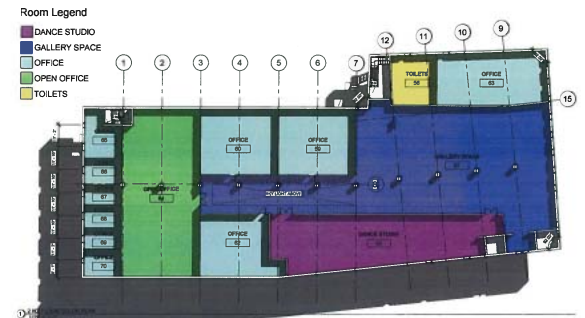
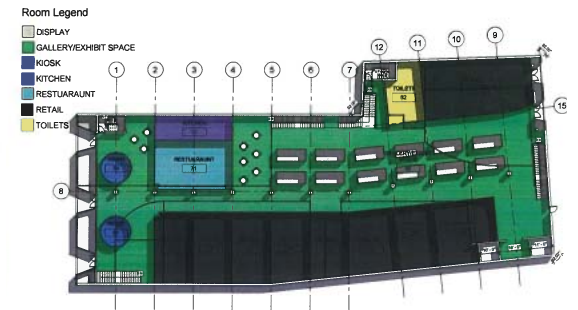
Existing conditions on Front Street - from left to right: Harrington Corner, 10 Front Street, 22 Front Street (the Midtown Mall).



Proposal for Front Street.



Front Street elevation.



Midtown Mall redevelopment concept plan: Front Street elevation, basement and floors 1 through 3 (from top), courtesy of City of Worcester and Benoit Reardon Architects.

1. Redevelopment of 20 Franklin Street



20 Franklin Street: existing Franklin Street façade.



20 Franklin Street: existing Federal Street façade.

20 Franklin Street is well-positioned to be the next catalytic development in Downtown Worcester. In 2011, the WBDC bought the 135,000 square foot building from the Worcester Telegram and Gazette in order to contribute to the Downtown's revitalization with a significant investment in a key location. The intent of the building's redevelopment is to introduce an innovative and dynamic use to Downtown Worcester that will stimulate business growth and increase the confidence of future investors. A potential community garden and/or green roof, and the intent to aim for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification of the redevelopment, indicate the WBDC's commitment to sustainable development.

The Master Plan advocates three uses within the building - an Innovation Center on Franklin Street, an academic tenant with ground-floor restaurant/retail on Federal Street, and a theater/conference center off Allen Court with a front door on Main Street. The Downtown has seen significant revitalization in the past decade, but the gains have not created the substantial revitalization of key properties. 20 Franklin Street, due to the commitment of the owner, its mission, and the size and location of the building, has the potential to re-brand the District. The façade on Franklin Street, in particular building signage, must successfully convey that Worcester has turned the page and begun a new chapter.



20 Franklin Street: existing ground level plan showing the five buildings that make up the property today. Plan courtesy of Cutler Design and the WBDC.

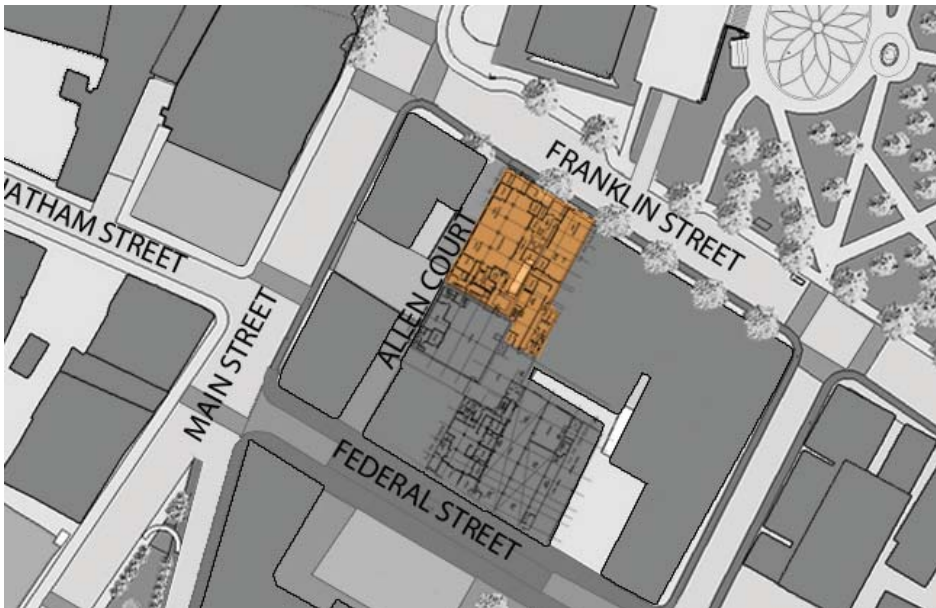
Existing Conditions

20 Franklin Street extends from Franklin Street to Federal Street along Allen Court. The building's scale and past use offer a considerable number of obstacles to redevelopment. The T&G is an assemblage of five structures, through which continuous navigation is possible, though not always straightforward. The floor levels of the buildings vary, requiring short runs of stairs. The large floor plate on Franklin Street minimizes opportunities for natural light, although a light well partially alleviates this problem. Finally, the historic uses of the building as a former newspaper printing operation has resulted in some environmental contamination within the building which will require remediation.

Despite these obstacles, the building has some very appealing attributes which promise a successful redevelopment. The location, across the street from City Hall and Worcester Common, is highly advantageous. The possibility of activating Allen Court, in combination with a series of private alleys, presents opportunities for a memorable space. The large floor plates in the buildings are fairly rare and highly valued by user groups that require an open plan. The building is paired with an ample supply of existing surface parking across Federal Street.



20 Franklin Street, Franklin Street façade, existing conditions.



Area proposed for Innovation Center highlighted in orange.

1.a Innovation on Franklin Street

Innovation Centers are a relatively new trend in U.S. cities, but one that has proven to be a successful tool in strengthening the economy by supporting new businesses. Such buildings provide facilities, including business and technical services, in order to minimize risk of a business start-up for entrepreneurs and create an environment within which businesses can incubate and grow. These Centers should be cost efficient for the start-up, allow for growth, but not carry long-term commitments. When the Franklin Street building is converted to an Innovation Center, the building must be redesigned and managed to include the following components expected at these spaces: an open floor plan, suites for collaboration, flexible short-term-leases and an eye-catching façade to attract innovators, entrepreneurs and the public.

The importance of a new façade signaling change in Downtown is paramount. It will be a key component in rebranding the building, and therefore the District as well. The rendering on the following page illustrates a fully transparent ground level and signage above to create activity on the street. If possible, introducing a vertical element to the façade should be considered. A study of the building indicates that the granite on the ground level of the façade can be removed; however the sandstone on the upper levels cannot be taken out without significant expense. Given the limitation to a full façade renovation, exterior and interior lighting design should be integrated into the design. Small elements of light can be applied to the building surface with minimal intervention and a more modest price, but can still create the desired effect of a significant change.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

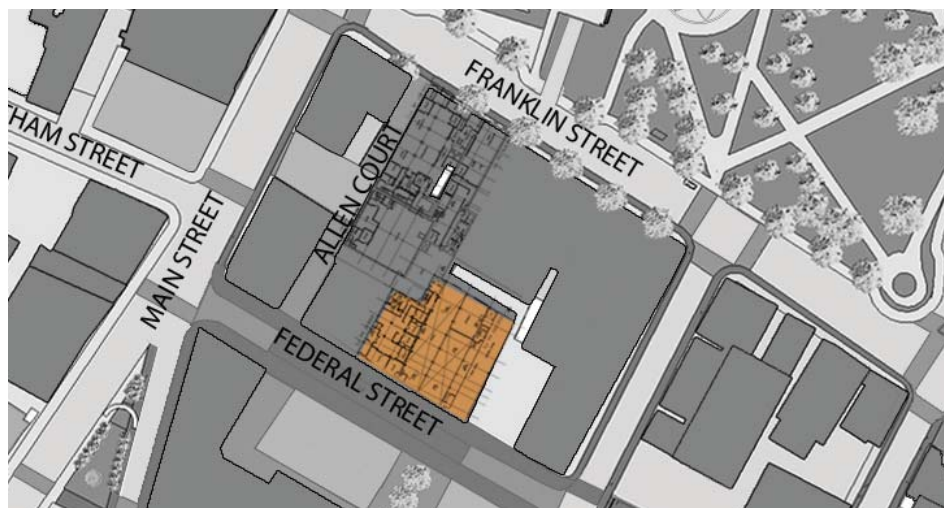


20 Franklin Street, Franklin Street façade. Proposed elevation with activated pedestrian alley on Allen Court courtesy of Gorman Richardson Lewis Architects.

1.b An Institution on Federal Street

The Master Plan recommends that the building on Federal Street be occupied by an institution, in order to build a presence downtown; Quinsigamond Community College is the likely tenant for at least a portion of the space. The two upper levels of this building should retain their open floor plan to allow maximum flexibility for academic use. Some remediation may be required. The Press Pit at the ground and lower level presents a unique opportunity for a memorable double-height bistro-style restaurant which could be formulated to serve patrons of the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts as well as the new students, residents and workers downtown. Enclosing the loading dock adjacent to the Federal Street portion of the building would create the ideal location for the main entrance and bar. Outdoor café seating located on Federal Street would contribute to the activation of Federal Street.

While the façade on Federal Street does not require substantial change, updates will be necessary to create the entry to the restaurant. Upper level windows should be replaced with clear glass to allow more light into the spaces.



Area proposed for institutional use highlighted in orange.



20 Federal Street, Federal Street façade, existing conditions.



20 Federal Street, Federal Street façade. Proposed elevation with loading dock adjacent to Federal Street enclosed, courtesy of Gorman Richardson Lewis Architects.

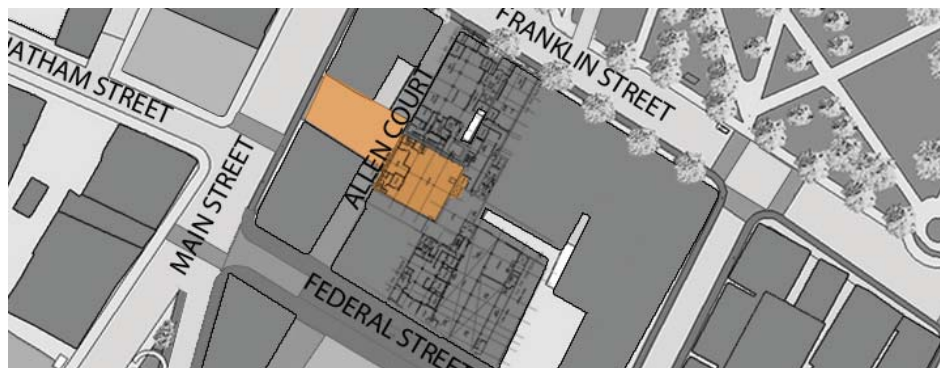
PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.c Theater/Conference Center off Main Street

The third major programming piece for 20 Franklin Street is a 5,000 square foot Performance Space/Conference Center. The Mezzanine Building of 20 Franklin Street fronts on Allen Court and could accommodate this use. A theater/conference center would have good synergies with academic uses and the Innovation Center as well as Downtown institutions. A reputable theater organization has indicated their interest in a two-city location while Worcester boasts many significant theater troupes and other arts organizations that might benefit from a new, smaller performance space.

Currently, access is only possible by entering on Franklin Street and walking through a large section of the building occupied by office space. The Master Plan recommends that an entry to the Mezzanine Building be created on Main Street by using either 517 or 521 Main Street, or both, as the address. These buildings are worn and have small floor plates; restoration is cost prohibitive. Recommendations to tear down existing buildings are not made lightly. However, these buildings could be replaced with a structured glass connection from Main Street to the Mezzanine Building, bisecting Allen Court and providing a lobby and ticketing area, and perhaps auxiliary public spaces, for the theater/conference center. The structure could extend all the way to Main Street, or a portion of the site could be used to create a small park as a forecourt. Seating for a café, either

indoors or outdoors, would help to activate this portion of Main Street. The new use and potential benefits to Downtown would merit the demolition of the existing structures.



Area proposed for Theater/Conference Center highlighted in orange.



Former alleyway converted to entertainment district entry in Boston.



Examples of glass box infill buildings adjacent to existing historic buildings.

2. New Development and Parking on Former T&G Parking Lot

The Former T&G Parking Lot refers to the collection of three parcels behind the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts that currently provide surface parking. Two of these parcels were recently purchased by the WBDC as part of the purchase of 20 Franklin Street. The third parcel, a surface parking lot, could also be incorporated into the potential development of this site. The assemblage of these parcels allows for a more efficient layout of surface parking in the short-term and better alternatives for development in the long-term.

The Master Plan studied several different options for these parcels including entertainment, residential, hotel, office, institutional and structured parking, as well as retaining surface parking. The final recommendation is for structured parking and new development.

Short-term Surface Parking

Currently, area businesses create a great demand for convenient parking for both monthly and annual leases for employees and tenants as well as fifteen-minute to two-hour spaces for customers. The lot is a tremendous resource. In the short term, the entire lot is required to support office uses in 20 Franklin Street. However, in order to increase utilization and efficiency, the lots should be combined and redesigned with landscape treatment following the City's guidelines. Master Plan recommendations for the surface lot are described in greater detail in the parking section of this report.



The T&G surface parking lot - existing conditions.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Entertainment/Office/Residential/Hotel/Institutional

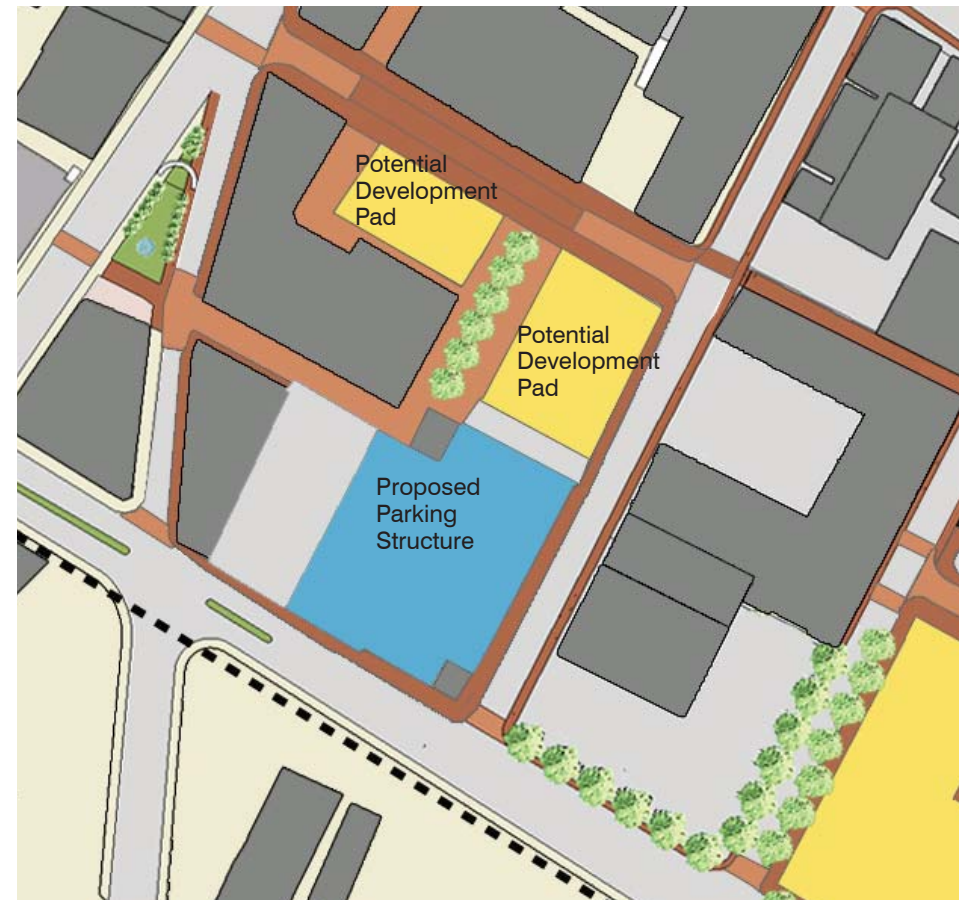
The Market Study established that current rental rates are a challenge for new construction in the short-term. A higher density of office and residential needs to be established in the District before new construction is feasible without significant public support. Once that critical density has been created, the parcels lining Federal Street offer great opportunities for new development to support the revitalized Downtown and Theatre District.

One of the priorities of this Master Plan is to capitalize on the private and public investment in the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts and guide the redevelopment of the area in a way that provides supporting or complementary uses. The illustrative plan shows two new buildings along Federal Street, and a new parking garage at the corner of Portland and Myrtle Streets. A new plaza and pedestrian path connect the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts and the parking garage to Federal Street, with room for outdoor tables to support new restaurants and/or other entertainment venues. The building footprints shown could accommodate residential, office, hotel or entertainment uses. Ground floor entertainment uses would greatly help to enliven the street and support the development of a destination entertainment district. The development on the smaller parcel could stand alone or be an addition to the 551 Main Street property located at the corner of Main and Federal Streets serving as cultural/entertainment/commercial program.

Structured Parking

The surface parking lot to the south of Burnside Court at the corner of Myrtle and Portland Streets is recommended as the site for a parking garage. The dimensions of the lot are ideal for an efficient parking garage. The central location would be convenient to many local businesses, most of which are within a quarter-mile, or 5-minute walk. Myrtle Street has very low density and is primarily lined by surface parking lots; a well-designed garage would help to define the street. The garage is shown with a glass box entrance/elevator lobby at the east

end of Burnside Court, providing views of Federal Street from all levels of the garage and direct pedestrian connections to Federal Street via the new plaza and to Main Street and the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts via Burnside Court. A second glass box/elevator lobby is shown at the Myrtle/Portland Street corner.



Proposed development of former T&G parking lot with new garage, 2 new buildings, and pedestrian connections to Federal Street.

3. Renovation and Redevelopment of the Midtown Mall as a Creative Economy Incubator

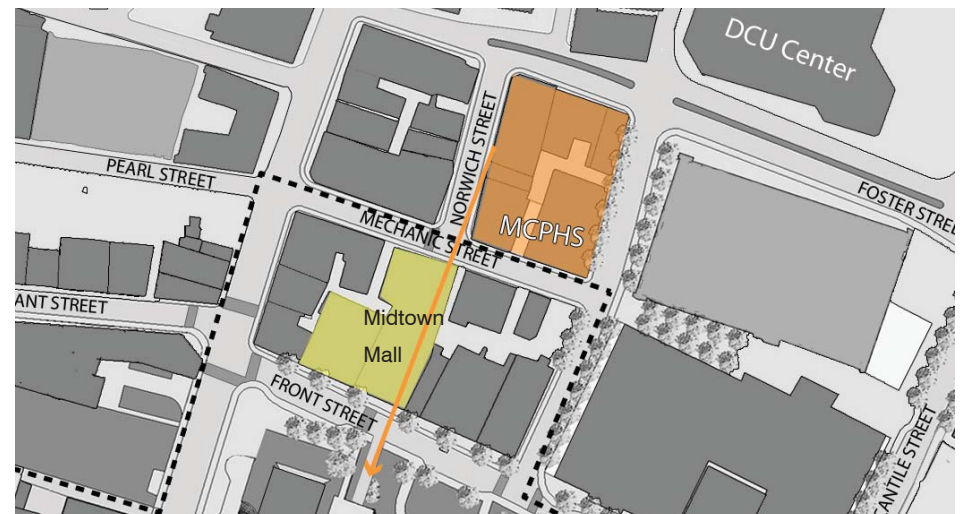
The Midtown Mall is an historic retail structure, serving as a site for retail pioneer F.W. Woolworth Company. The building provides an indoor pedestrian connection between the growing Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences campus, clustered around Mechanic Street, and Worcester Common. As the Downtown continues to become more active and vibrant, this pedestrian connection will become a more critical link between Downtown anchor institutions. While most of the tenant spaces on the ground floor are occupied on an at-will basis, the current tenant mix does not possess universal appeal to Downtown professionals and newer residents and students. To succeed, the property will need to adapt to demographic shifts within the Downtown and provide broader offerings.

Significant improvements to the Midtown Mall and adjacent 10 Front Street are required to attract new tenancies. A renovated façade, improved signage, restructured circulation and layout are all necessary to create a welcoming center for economic activity. A creative economy incubator that provides spaces for creative retail, artists and craftspeople would be a good initial step to accommodate diverse interests and budgets within the space. Non-street level spaces could serve an institutional partner, as well as smaller arts organizations

within Worcester seeking shared administrative and support services. A small theater and/or performance space could support an independent film house such as Clark University’s Cinema 320 as well as dance and theater practices spaces. Some larger scale retailers, food service, or shops may also be desirable, and could be accommodated by consolidating some smaller tenants and reserving fewer areas for smaller vendors. Despite its strategic location, re-tenanting is unlikely without comprehensive reinvestment to the street frontages and the arcade interior. The building could be redeveloped in conjunction with the conversion of adjacent 12 Front Street into a student-oriented residential complex. The upper floors in 12 Front Street currently are partially occupied with office in spaces that are in relatively good condition. Façade improvements to the building will make the upper levels more attractive for new tenants. It also will greatly contribute to the building’s image and attract new customers. While the upstairs spaces have limited windows and deep floor plates, the enhancement of the building with mechanical and shell improvements could make the building more competitive for offices or institutions looking to lease space in proximity to City Hall, downtown theaters, shops, the Worcester Public Library and nearby educational and health care institutions.



Norwich Street connects MCPHS to the rear of the Midtown Mall.



The Midtown Mall is an important part of the pedestrian network Downtown. It creates a direct connection for MCPHS students, faculty and staff to approach the Common area.

4. Redevelopment of the Francis J. McGrath Municipal Parking Lot

The Worcester Public Library and YWCA, two of Worcester's more prominent community institutions, sit on an island bordered by Salem, Myrtle, and Franklin Streets and McGrath Boulevard. As a result of history, geography, public infrastructure needs, and the limited architectural and urban design vision of the 1960s and 1970s, the two institutions draw significant visitors to the Theatre District, yet these visitors have little interaction with the rest of the Downtown. The existing campus of the Worcester Public Library and the YWCA can be defined primarily by its sea of surface parking, with limited landscaping and pedestrian amenity. While the 2.75-acre Francis J. McGrath Municipal Parking Lot adjacent to the Worcester Public Library and the 1.5 acre parking lot adjacent to the YWCA provide the amenity of convenient parking for patrons of these institutions and others, this area can be improved to offer parking, provide an additional anchor to bring activity to the District, and clarify pedestrian connectivity for the area.

Programmatically, the Worcester Public Library and YWCA are complementary neighbors. The Master Plan considers a redesign of the site to create more usable shared open space and a more attractive, visible entry to the campus. Library Lane is realigned to provide a straight connection between Salem Street and Frances J. McGrath Boulevard. The realigned street, along with adjacent open space to the north and south, creates a new urban space – Library Plaza. Library Plaza could host outdoor Library or YWCA activities, serve as a site for public gatherings and small festivals, or host food trucks or related amenities. On the north side, a new, small building is shown. The building is envisioned as a primarily glass structure housing the Library's bookstore and a proposed new café, visible from the entrances to the Library, the YWCA and new development to the south, as well as from Salem Street. The YWCA tot lot, currently on the rear of the building facing the Foster Street/McGrath Boulevard/Franklin Street/Green Street intersection, is relocated so that it faces the Library, is in a sunnier location and can be used by visitors to both facilities. The existing tot lot can then be used as an expansion of the YWCA staff parking lot. The realignment of Library Lane, creation of Library Plaza, and the reconfiguration of existing parking allows for the creation of an approximately 3-acre parcel for a substantial development that could serve as an additional anchor for the area. The Worcester



Existing YWCA/Library/McGrath Parking Lot block.



Glass enclosed cafe in Post Office Square Park in Boston, similar to proposed cafe/bookstore in front of the Worcester Library.

Public Library recently completed a survey of visitors to understand needs. This development could provide some food service and retail amenities as requested by library patrons. Additionally, redevelopment of this site will eliminate negative perceptions within the area and incorporate activity, design, and lighting elements to improve the visitor experience to the area. Combined with the proposed pedestrian connection through the Portland Street Lofts, this growing area will begin to serve as a key element of a broader Theatre District vibrancy.

As part of the public discussion, concerns about parking and design were raised related to the redevelopment of this lot. Reconfiguration of the existing Francis J. McGrath Municipal Parking Lot and the YWCA parking lot offer a number of efficiencies in terms of layout and utilization that will minimize parking impacts. A study conducted as part of the master plan efforts identified long-term parkers as the primary users of space within the McGrath Lot. Long-term parkers include staff of the Worcester Public Library and nearby organizations and businesses. Worcester Public Library patrons utilize a more limited number of parking spaces and usually for a period not exceeding two hours. Additionally, the Worcester Public Library Board of Trustees expressed concern about the design of any proposed development. One concept raised during the master plan process was the construction of an ice skating facility that could serve local colleges and secondary schools. Currently, a number of Worcester institutions leave the city for practice times and games, resulting in high cost and lost efficiencies for the institutions and lost economic opportunity for Worcester. Understandably, the ice skating facility proposal raised questions regarding use, architectural design, and impact on the surrounding area. Any redevelopment of the McGrath Lot will require further study of impacts and alternatives. Any proposal for the redevelopment of the Francis J. McGrath Municipal Parking Lot will require the input and oversight of a number of public boards and commissions including, but not limited to, the Worcester Off-Street Parking Board, Worcester City Council, and Worcester Planning Board. This Master Plan does not advocate for any particular use or activity at the Francis J. McGrath Municipal Park Lot, other than to highlight the redevelopment potential of the site, and argue that acreage committed to surface parking impedes the development opportunity of the broader Theatre

District, isolates the Worcester Public Library and YWCA, and creates negative perceptions within the area.



Proposed plan for YWCA/Library/McGrath Parking Lot area.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Renovation/Rehabilitation of The Park Plaza

The Park Plaza is an eleven-story, steel-frame building with a decorative limestone façade on the corner of Main and Franklin Streets, across from City Hall. The lower level is approximately 10,900 square feet and holds retail as well as the lobby and management to upper level residential. Each of the upper 10 floors has a reduced L-shaped floor plate of 9,200 square feet holding approximately 9 units, for a total of 90 units. The Park Plaza is, unfortunately, a disproportionate recipient of City of Worcester services, as a result of the high number of Worcester Police Department and Worcester Fire Department calls from the address.

The Park Plaza property also includes 518 Main Street, a parcel on the corner of Main and Chatham Streets that is currently used as a surface parking lot and holds approximately 31 spaces.

The Park Plaza has great redevelopment potential. As illustrated by the success of the Portland Street Lofts, there is latent demand for high-quality Downtown Worcester residential units. The Master Plan calls the renovation of The Park Plaza to include a renewed façade and ground-floor positioning, larger units, and higher-end appliances and services. Like its Boston namesake, The Park Plaza could be a premier address in Downtown Worcester, located on Main Street and adjacent to Worcester Common. A true renovation to encourage higher-end occupancy would require an additional 59 parking spaces, in order to offer a parking ratio of 1.0 space per unit. In the longer term, the 518 Main Street parcel has been identified as a development opportunity and is shown with a new six-story building. In the interim, 518 Main Street should be regraded, restriped, and appropriately landscaped.



Park Plaza on Main Street.

6. Renovation/Restructuring of the Former Filene's Building as Student-Focused Housing

The Former Filene's Building is located at the corner of Main and Federal Streets. The lower level has two separate buildings of approximately 10,500 and 6,000 square feet. The ground level of the larger building currently holds retail and office uses. The smaller building has law offices on the ground level but the façade lacks fenestration. The 6,000 square foot building has an additional six floors. The larger building extends to cover Allen Court with a 13,000 square foot floor plate and has four upper floors. The upper levels of the entire building hold 80 residential condos; however, most are not owner-occupied. There are approximately 10 parking spaces designated for the building in a small garage within the building, accessed via Allen Court. The condominium association of the Former Filene's Building struggles as a result of absentee ownership and limited condominium fee income. As a result, the building suffers from significant deferred maintenance and struggles to attract new ownership and even quality tenants. The Master Plan suggests the consolidation of owners of the property into a single owner/manager and the conversion into student-based rental housing. The ownership could either be an academic institution or a private owner contracted with an institutional tenant base. To compete for high quality tenants, it is possible that 70 additional parking spaces would be required to achieve a parking ratio of 1.0 spaces per unit, as well as 10 additional spaces for the retail tenants, for a total of 90 spaces. The façade, while attractive, requires renovation and the building should be repositioned within the marketplace and rebranded with a new moniker. Ultimately, this property has the potential to serve as a residential and commercial gateway to Federal Street.



Former Filene's Building on Main Street.

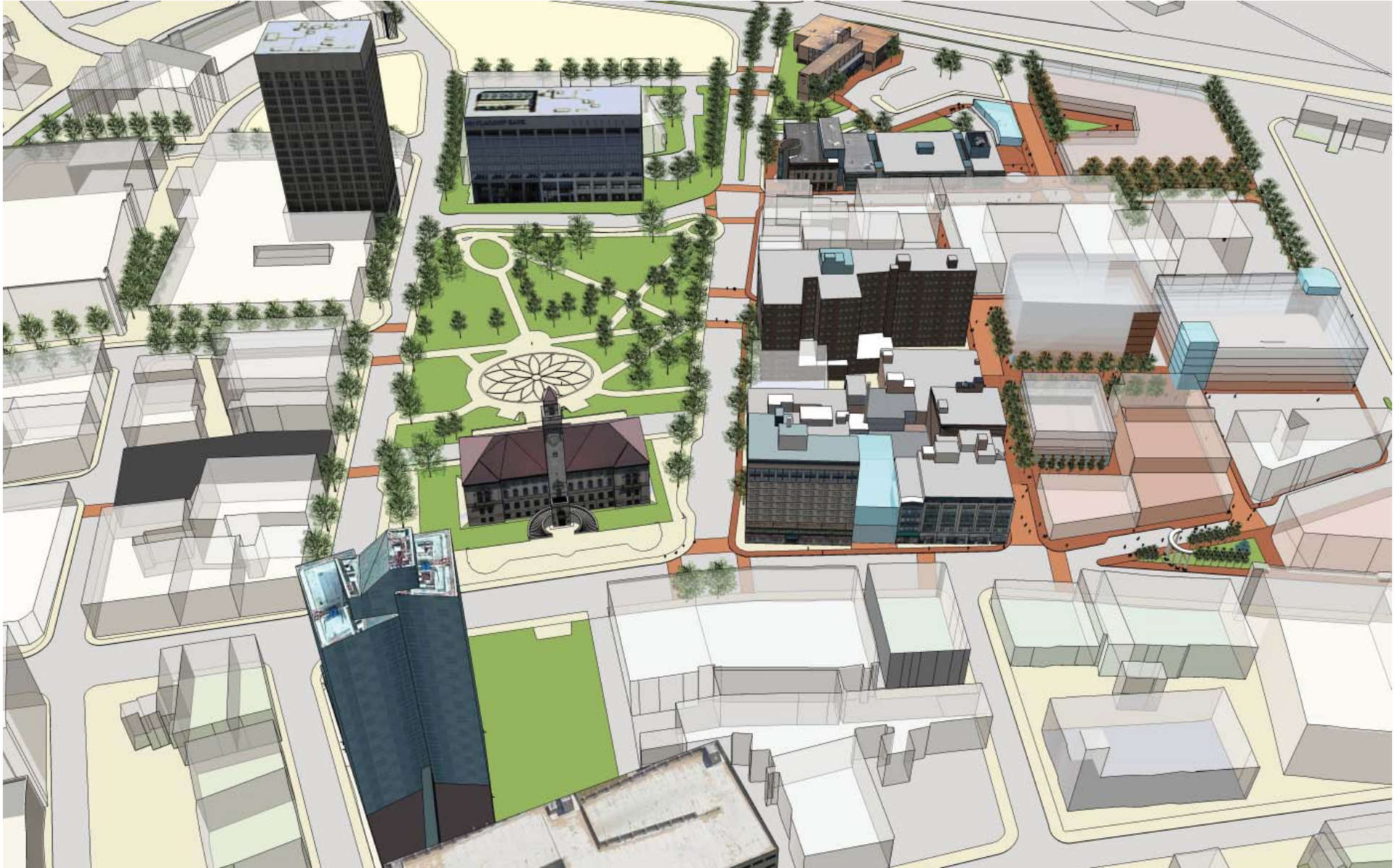
PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Redevelopment of the PASOW Building as Market-Rate Housing

The Performing Arts School of Worcester (PASOW) Building sits just off Main Street on Chatham Street, across from The Cathedral of Saint Paul. The property is currently vacant. The building has had several uses throughout its life. It has two wings allowing for construction of different residential unit styles. The taller building could hold traditional apartment-style units with one or two bedrooms. The shorter red brick wing is currently one large, uninterrupted floor plate. It could be divided into loft-style units, potentially for use as artist housing. Altogether, approximately 25 units could be created within this building. The PASOW building has a surface and covered parking lot attached to the building with 28 spaces available, providing more spaces than needed to meet a 1.0 parking ratio.



PASOW Building on Chatham Street.



Aerial view of project area looking south over Main Street, illustrating recommended improvements and development.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Parking

As is the case in many downtowns, parking is considered a top priority to business owners, employees and residents. Specifically, the issue of parking quantity – or perceived quantity and the issue of proximity were repeatedly referenced as part of the Master Plan process. As a mixed-use District there are clearly needs for short term parking (15 minute to 2 hours), full day parking (8 hour) for employees, overnight parking for residents, and event parking (3 to 5 hours) on various days and times throughout the week.

While a formal parking study has not been undertaken as part of this report, anecdotally, it is understood that many District business owners feel that there is not enough long-term, leasable parking for employees within what is perceived as a convenient and safe distance. Moreover, property owners report that parking is often cited by prospective tenants for choosing alternatives to Downtown. Additionally, store owners (on Front Street in particular) feel that there is not enough available short-term parking to encourage business. That said, there are approximately 1,300 spaces available in surface lots and parking structures within the Theatre District. Approximately one-quarter of those spaces are for private use. Immediately adjacent to the study area are five parking structures providing an additional 3,420 spaces.

It is quite possible that the use of nearby spaces by employees greatly reduces availability for potential customers. Lack of turnover of short-term spaces in a central business district due to longer-term employee parking is not conducive to an active and vital retail district. Moving employee parking to the available spaces at the edges of the District will make more spaces available for customers. A one-quarter mile walk is considered to be a reasonable distance between parking and destination by most urban standards. One recommendation of the Master Plan is the establishment of a digital Downtown Parking signage program that highlights available spaces and distance to employees and visitors to the Downtown so that parking availability is better understood. The Master Plan recommendations related to streetscape and pedestrian network will address perceptions of safety and attractiveness in the public realm, helping to ensure that the walk between parking and destination remains comfortable and enjoyable.

There are more specific and specialized parking needs that need to be examined on a parcel by parcel basis. Among them is the parking and service related to the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts functioning both in terms of the 'back of house' needs to setting up of a show with the arrival and delivery of large pieces of equipment. Efforts to address this issue are part of considerations related to the redevelopment of the Federal Street parcels and Burnside Court.

Most of the District's streets accommodate on-street parking to some degree with parallel parking on one or both sides of the street. There is an interest in increasing the number of these spaces in order to supplement existing numbers and anticipate future needs as best as possible. As structured parking can cost



City-owned surface parking lot on Myrtle Street and McGrath Boulevard.

\$20,000 per space or more, the Master Plan recommends creating additional on-street spaces where possible in order to reserve this investment for a time when all other options have been exhausted.

While linear footage of available curb will not increase within the study area, it is possible to create more on-street parking by converting parallel parking to angled parking spaces. In the public realm where funding dollars are at a premium, it is strategic to add angled parking on streets that will accommodate the dimensions without demanding the additional expense in moving curbs. Not only can dollars be allocated to other improvements, this strategy does not diminish the already limited sidewalk widths. However, the ability to add angled parking will potentially require the transformation of some two-way blocks to one-way blocks, allowing the space currently allocated for a travel lane to be allocated to the angled spaces.

The Master Plan encourages the consideration of Portland Street and Salem Street for the incorporation of angled parking, with associated traffic conversions necessary.

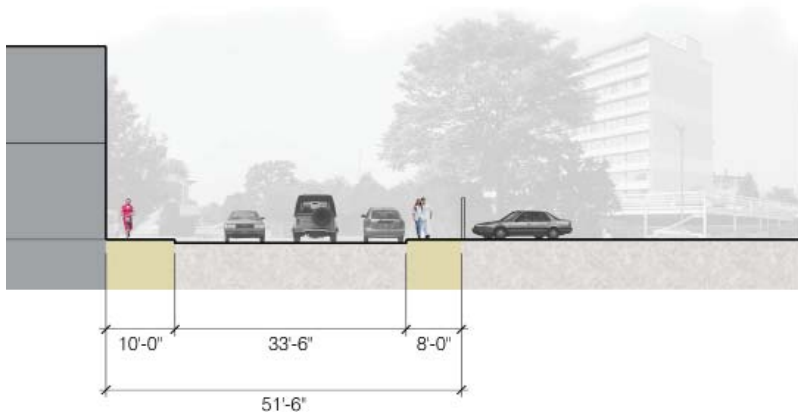
Portland Street is slightly more complicated because of its relationship to Franklin Street and the traffic impacts of the pending CitySquare development. Therefore, the recommendation is to pursue conversion to one-way and angled spaces on the southern portion of Portland Street, from Federal Street to Myrtle Street, and retain the northern portion from Franklin Street to Federal Street as two-way. The conversion will allow a net increase of 14 spaces.



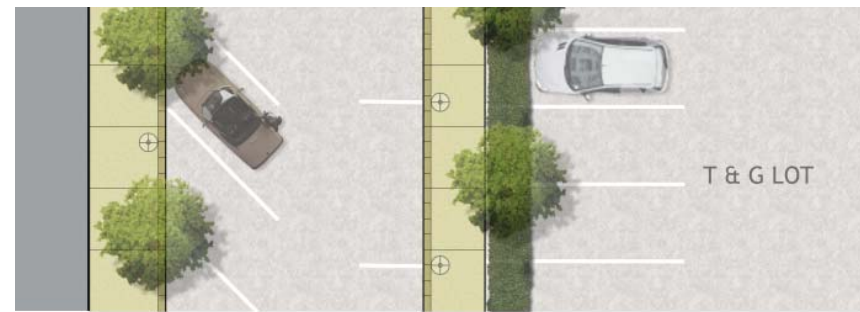
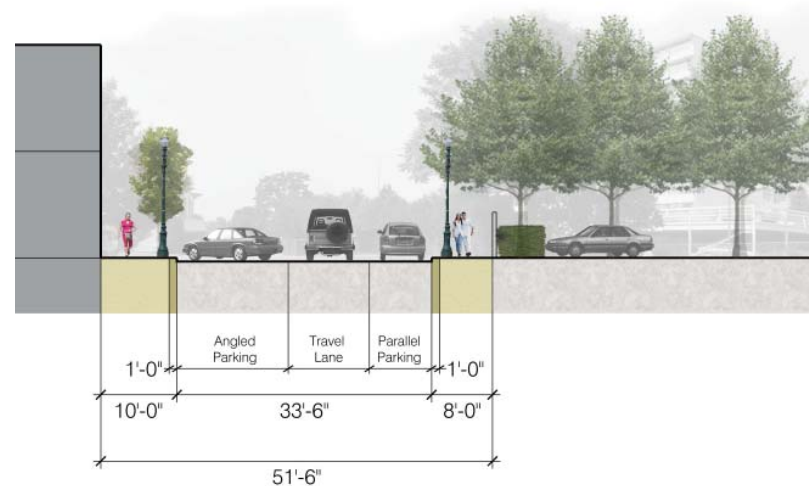
Proposed traffic flow on Portland and Salem Streets after introduction of angled parking.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EXISTING



PROPOSED



Portland Street - Addition of Angled Parking on One Side		
Before	After	Change
59	73	+14

Proposed angled parking on Portland Street between Federal and Myrtle Streets.

Former T&G Lot - Surface Parking

The Former Telegram and Gazette is an important parking parcel which currently holds approximately 220 spaces on three separate but adjacent lots. The lot is also in a prominent location in the interior zone of the Theatre District adjacent to the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts. As a result, it has the potential to play a significant role in making important mid-block pedestrian connections via Burnside Court. Using Burnside Court as a pedestrian spine through the block allows the parking parcels to be combined into two zones rather than the three parcels that currently compose the space. The new strategy allows for a design that will unify the parcels and provide efficiency for management and clarity for pedestrians.

Very specific to the Former T&G lot is the need for WB-50 truck access to the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts. Access to the Theatre's truck dock is on the south side of the building, on the eastern corner. It is oriented in a north-south direction, perpendicular to the building. Currently, WB-50 trucks enter from Myrtle Street and use a broad area of open lot to maneuver to the truck docks. A key to the success of this current strategy, or any other future strategy, is the fact that the truck deliveries of this scale (WB-50) occur in the early morning when the lot is empty, or at the very least not accommodating employee parking for various adjacent businesses. In addition to the area needed for maneuvering, an additional strip is needed as a holding area for the performers' buses during shows. On occasions when more than one truck comes to unload, often necessary approximately eight times per year during the larger productions, the Theatre has traditionally had a place to keep one or two on-site. The storage of trucks or busses on those days would preclude that space from being used by other vehicles. The Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts has previously used the twelve foot fire lane to the rear of the building for this purpose. However, the Master Plan recommends this space be maintained as a pedestrian path, but to reserve adjacent parking spaces adjacent for this purpose as necessary. All lot designs should conform to the standards outlined in the 2012 edition of the City of Worcester Streetscape Policy and the City of Worcester Urban Design

Guidelines and the Rules and Regulation for Parking Plan Approvals, June 2009 Amendments.

Former T&G Lot - Structured Parking

Federal Plaza is a public parking garage located in Federal Square across from the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts. As the District develops, however, and buildings increase in occupancy, the need for more parking may dictate the construction of one or more free standing parking structures. Parking structures already ring the Downtown and provide flexible parking areas for the mixed-use district.

An ideal site for a new parking structure is the corner of Portland and Myrtle Streets, which currently provides surface parking. The structure could be 4 to 6 levels above grade and hold 450-675 spaces. As described earlier, the garage pedestrian entrances (one at the northwest corner and one at the southwest corner) should be designed as glass towers, providing good visibility to and from Burnside Court and the new plaza connection to Federal Street/Theatre Square, as well as to Myrtle and Portland Streets. With the construction of the Federal Street pedestrian connection through the Portland Street Lofts, this parking structure could also serve the Worcester Public Library area.

Access to the garage would be from Myrtle Street, much as the surface parking is accessed today. The garage aisles are oriented to facilitate pedestrian movement to Federal and Myrtle Streets, as well as to Burnside Court. Given the prominence of the location on Myrtle Street, the façade would need to be treated with an architectural panel system that is compatible with the adjacent Stevens Block architecture. The garage design needs to include landscape treatment along Myrtle Street, Portland Street, and Burnside Court, following the City's Urban Design Guidelines. The management of the structure would ensure that it function as a shared facility for residents, office workers and visitors/theater patrons through a combination of monthly and hourly payment methods.

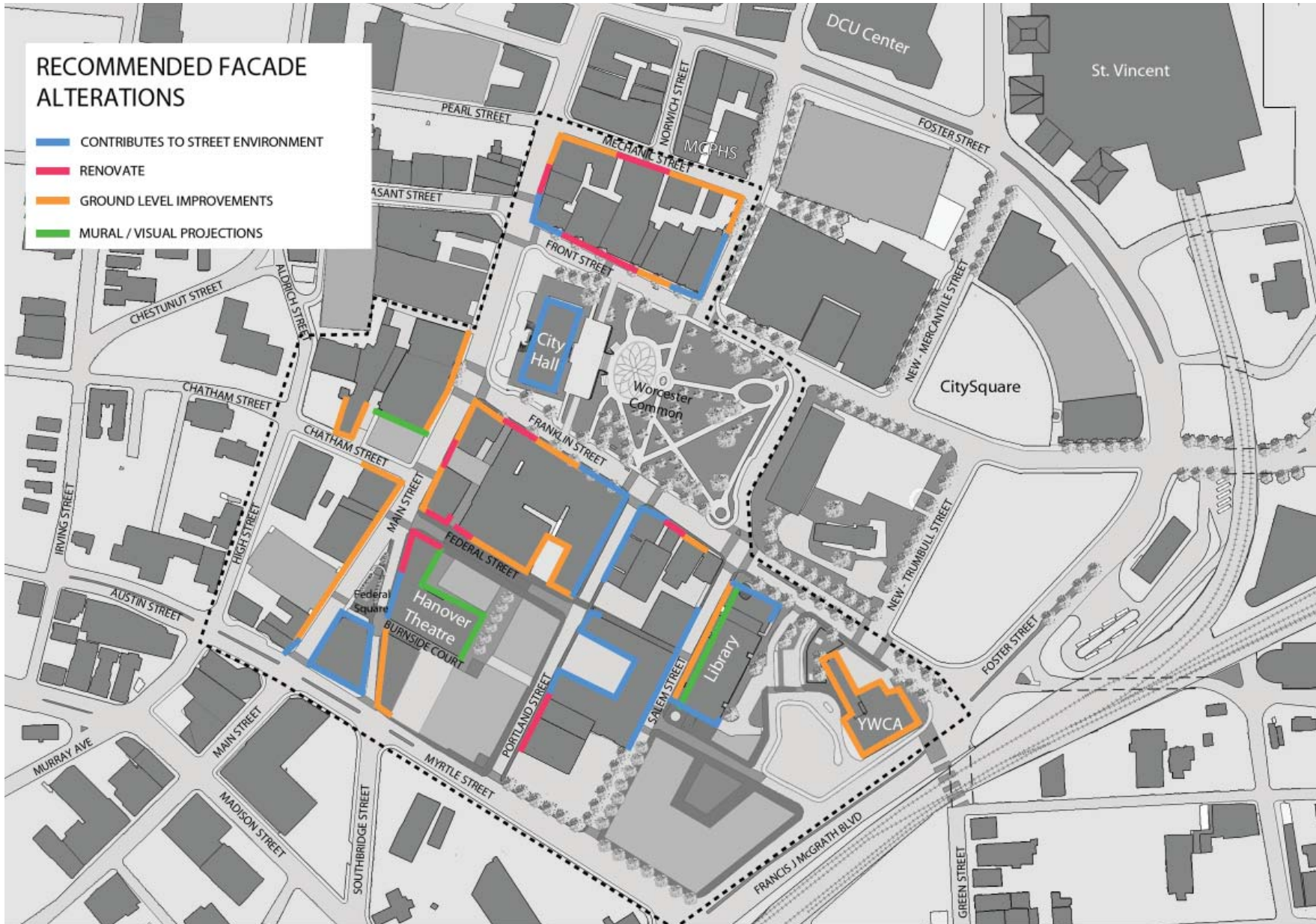
PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following construction of the garage, the truck access to the theatre loading dock will be modified. There are several options:

1. Trucks on Portland Street can turn to the west at the north end of the new garage and traverse the first floor of the new garage to the surface lot, turn left parallel to the garage and back up to the loading dock. The garage second floor elevation and the building's structural grid can be designed to accommodate this WB-50 truck access.
2. Trucks proceeding west on Myrtle Street on the inside lane can back into the surface lot parallel to the west face of the garage and back up to the loading dock.
3. The proposed plaza between the two new buildings on the south side of Federal Street can be designed to accommodate trucks entering from Federal Street, driving south to the surface lot and backing up to the loading dock. The northwest corner of the new garage will need to be set back to accommodate this move.



Proposed new garage on former T&G lot, with vehicular access on Myrtle Street and pedestrian access to Burnside Court, the pedestrian plaza to Federal Street and Myrtle/Portland Streets.



Recommended facade alterations were divided into four categories.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

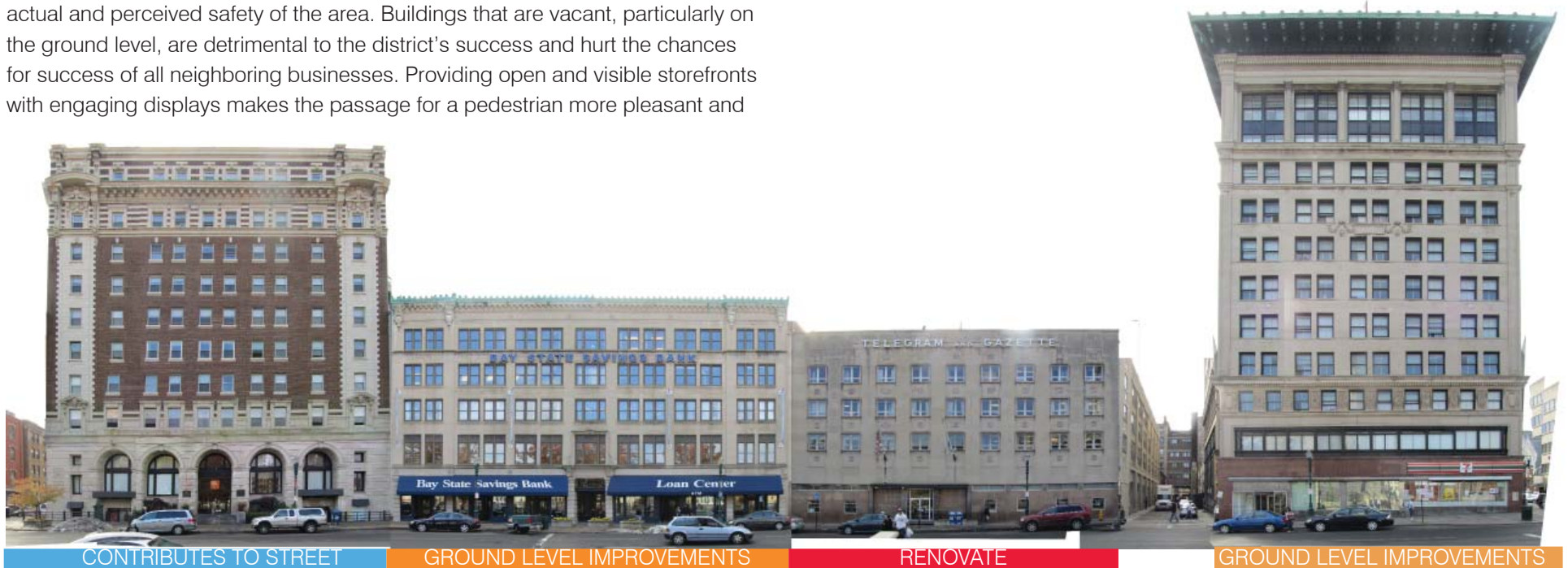
Building Façades

Downtown Worcester has great commercial building stock. Many of the most prominent buildings are from the mid-to-late 1800s, designed in a manner that is still usable today. However, there are significant signs of wear and neglect on some buildings within the study area which contribute to a negative perception of the area. Vacancies and non-retail uses can also degrade the pedestrian experience by removing visual interest when blinds and papered windows eliminate the connection between the street and the building interior. A combination of façade improvements, renovations and storefront upgrades are necessary to enhance the pedestrian quality and perception of the Theatre District and Downtown generally. Any building renovations should consider the conservation of original architectural details to preserve the District's historical identity.

Open façades, where a line of sight can connect people on the sidewalk and those within the building, increases the 'eyes on the street' and increases the actual and perceived safety of the area. Buildings that are vacant, particularly on the ground level, are detrimental to the district's success and hurt the chances for success of all neighboring businesses. Providing open and visible storefronts with engaging displays makes the passage for a pedestrian more pleasant and

increases one's willingness to walk. The increased number of pedestrians will benefit retail establishments, ensuring that more proximate spaces are available for retail customers and encouraging the utilization of remote parking areas for employees.

The Master Plan calls for several different levels of façade improvements in the study area. It also notes and applauds those buildings that are already contributing to a positive environment. Many façades have been renovated recently and are already contributing to an improved vibe on the streets. Some needed renovations are significant and call for a substantial investment to repair buildings that have significant deferred maintenance. However, most storefronts need far less – a coat of paint, removal of visual obstructions, new lighting and signage – in order to create a more welcoming street environment that will in turn draw pedestrians onto the sidewalks.



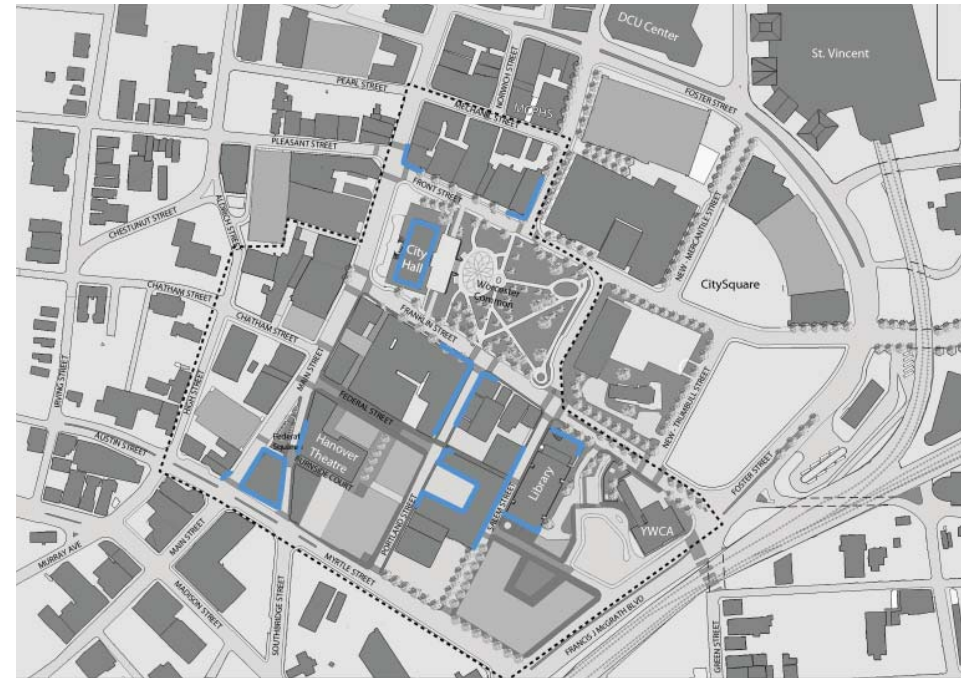
Façades on Franklin Street. From left to right: Bancroft Commons, Bay State Savings Bank, 20 Franklin Street, Park Plaza.

As shown on the diagram on Page 57, buildings have been divided into four categories:

- Contributes to Street Environment
- Needs Renovation
- Needs Ground-Level Improvement
- Location for Mural/Visual Projections

Contributes to Street Environment

There are many buildings whose façades are already contributing to the street environment. The public buildings in the Downtown – City Hall, the Federal Courthouse, and the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts – are architecturally distinguished, well-maintained and enhance the Downtown. Several property owners have worked to substantially improve the quality of the architecture and their presence on the street. These properties include Harrington Corner, Bancroft Residences and Portland Street Lofts, the Owl Shop, and the Stevens Block, to name a few. Owners of these buildings are leaders of Downtown revitalization and set the standard for subsequent redevelopment and restoration.



Building façades which contribute to the street environment are highlighted in blue.



Hanover Theatre



Harrington Corner



Bancroft Commons

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Needs Renovation

There are a limited number of deteriorated properties that demand a full renovation of the façade. The specific problems and level of deterioration vary but their ongoing presence negatively impacts the perception of the Downtown. Without improvements to these properties, particularly those on Main Street, the Downtown will not achieve its full development potential.

Each building is unique and therefore the scale of intervention differs. Some have replaced the original façade with nondescript coverings. Others have ground-level façades that are close to entirely opaque and need fenestration, or have security grates that should be removed. Examples of buildings requiring renovation include the Former T&G Building's Franklin Street façade, the Federal Street façade of the Former Filene's Building, and the Portland Street façade of the Printer's Building. 415 Main Street's façade, home of WCCA-TV 13, is worn and dated and the adjacent 403 Main Street, home of Shack's Clothes, suffers from severe weatherization and an architecturally insignificant storefront modification. 484 Main Street, the former Denholm's Department Store, has lost its unique architectural elements over the years. 551 Main Street has only a temporary mural façade which needs to be replaced before occupancy can occur. 10 Front Street, in addition to needing considerable storefront improvements, appears to have a second floor where the façade has been covered. The façade should be restored to its original appearance or renovated to include fenestration on the upper level.

Other buildings, such as the Paris Cinema and 517-521 Main Street, are deteriorated and are unable to be fully or partially occupied without substantial renovation or replacement. These buildings perhaps represent the greatest challenge at the moment because renovations would extend beyond the façade to the full building. Depending on conditions, it may be found that renovation is more expensive than demolition and new construction.



Building façades recommended for renovation are highlighted in pink.



10 Front Street



415 Main Street

Needs Ground-Level Improvements

A dozen buildings need substantial improvements to the ground level façades in order to activate the streets. Some buildings, such as the Midtown Mall and adjacent properties on Front Street or the Denholm Building on Main Street, need invest in the façade and require tenants to maintain clean and well-lit storefront displays and improve street-level visibility. The Denholm Building retail would be more successful and would contribute more to street life if the ground floor were reconfigured to include shop fronts, with individual doors on the street, as opposed to just window displays. The Small Business Service Bureau, located in a beautifully maintained set of buildings on Federal Square, has limited ground-floor appeal due to the lack of active retail and the incorporation of ground-floor office activity. All storefronts should have good signage, transparency, and otherwise follow the City’s Urban Design Guidelines for ground-level façade treatments.

Parking structures, such as the Federal Plaza Parking Garage are difficult to activate. However, a simple screen – whether art or plant material – could be added to bring some texture and interest to the street level. As per the Urban Design Guidelines, the façade of any parking structure, particularly one on Main Street, should be designed to relate to the scale, proportion and character of surrounding buildings.

Other buildings, such as the Worcester Public Library façade on Salem Street, are in good condition but have very limited entries onto the street and therefore fail to activate the sidewalk. The Library has only a single entrance on Salem Street and no public entrance on Franklin Street. The Library, at a minimum, should consider activating the portico with seating and patron services such as play area or café to enliven the street experience. This will be especially important with the construction of the Federal Street pedestrian extension to Salem Street.



Building façades recommended for ground-level improvements are highlighted in orange.



22 Front Street, Midtown Mall



526 Main Street, The Money Stop

Mural / Visual Projection

A handful of blank façades in the Downtown provide ideal surfaces for public art – possibly large murals or temporary light projections. The southern façade of the Denholm Building, the Portland Street Lofts Garage, the blank west wall of the Library at the end of the new connection from Salem Street, as well as the east and north surfaces of the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts and the west side of 551 Main Street, are potential candidates for this treatment. In some cases, development proposed in this plan for adjacent parcels would block views to any wall treatments. Such treatments should, therefore, be considered temporary and designed accordingly. Given the presence of the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, lighted wall projections could promote upcoming performances or feature local artists or performances. Worcester Film Works is involved in the Movies on the Common program could play an important role in leading this project. Murals on building façades have a long and rich history. They can be historical, political, or purely aesthetic. Regardless of the message, they are able to activate a space and bring new meaning to it in a cost effective manner. Additionally, a competition could be held, engaging artists across the Commonwealth, to submit ideas for the space. Activities of this nature can bring beauty to the City, while also creating positive press and increasing the “buzz” and unique identity of the Theatre District. The City is engaged in an effort to review existing public art elements and propose new public art concepts. That initiative will also consider additional public art opportunities within the Theatre District and beyond.



Building façades recommended for visual projection are highlighted in green.



A festive light projection.

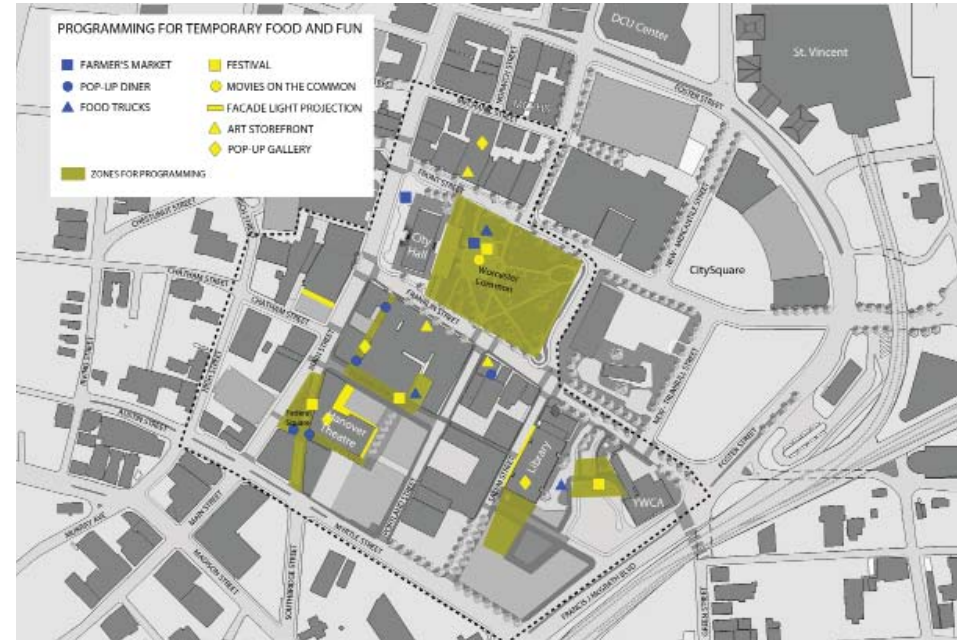


A simple yet elegant two-tone mural in Cambridge, MA.

Programming Options for Downtown

A key factor restricting vibrancy in the Theatre District is the lack of active retail storefronts and the poor quality of available goods and services. Due to the diminished demand for retail, many storefronts have been converted to office uses. There is doubtless a significant amount of “leakage” of goods and services that are being bought or consumed outside of the area that could be captured within the District. Yet, despite the growing Downtown population, the risk for potential retail tenants is great. The Market Study indicates that an increase in 600 to 800 residential units and an additional 10,000 office workers Downtown will create a reliable market for retail. Before those benchmarks are achieved, the Master Plan recommends engaging in a networked strategy introducing a variety of temporary events and vendors in order to begin to change perceptions of the District with minimum risk to the merchants. Partnerships for creative programming and capital installations will be key to the sustainability of vibrant ongoing programming for events.

Programming Downtown has already begun with the events planned on Worcester Common, including outdoor summertime concerts and movies, festivals, and winter ice skating. The Master Plan calls for the creation of additional spaces for an expansion of complementary public events. The proposed modifications to Federal Street, Southbridge Street, Burnside Court, Allen Court and Library Plaza will provide additional areas to host events, festivals, and art shows. The paved surfaces of streets and alleys are easier to clean and harder to damage than lawns. The architectural constraints provide an intimate scale that could suit a smaller event than the Common. The enhancements include provision for services including electricity, water and lighting that will be essential to the success of such spaces.



Proposed programming locations.



Farmer's market stand.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Food

Farmer's Market

As the local and organic food movement builds, farmer's markets are returning in popularity across the country. Farmer's markets naturally provide a bounty of fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables, and can be a great opportunity to include other vendors of food and small goods – honey, homemade pasta, bakeries, cheeses, meats, soaps and candles, and plants. Events such as these are important to the survival of local farms and can provide an opportunity for a small food vendor to break into the market. Food trucks often park next to farmer's markets to allow office workers to get lunch and shop for dinner in one stop.

Pop-up Dinner

Additionally, a variety of temporary or seasonal venues, such as pop-up dinners have been successfully used in urban districts to temporarily activate public spaces or vacant storefronts. Pop-up dinners can be serviced by nearby kitchens or trucks that provide full services for seating and dining. The use of private alleys for such purposes allow for the event sponsor to control access and serve alcohol, which would otherwise be precluded in a public space.

Food Trucks

One method to jump-start the creation of an active and vibrant Downtown is recruiting temporary food vendors at appropriate locations. The relatively low cost of initial investment for food truck operators allows them to enter emerging markets where entrepreneurs are not yet ready to invest in storefront improvements and kitchen construction. Recommended locations for food trucks include: Worcester Common; Federal Street, within the courtyard of 20 Franklin Street and Bancroft Commons as well as the Former T&G parking lot; and, Library Plaza. These spaces are in or near a well-traveled location, but have the capacity for several trucks. In cities across America, food trucks are turning into the latest



Pop-up Dinner.



Grilled Cheese Nation food truck.

culinary craze. The vendors usually have limited but high quality choices. In Boston, diverse trucks with different offerings and catchy names include Lobsta Love (lobster rolls), Clover (vegetarian options with a cult-like following that has sprouted a restaurant), and Grilled Cheese Nation.

Fun

Many of the ‘fun’ activities – movies on Worcester Common and other public parks, festivals, and storefront art have already taken root in Worcester. These efforts, which add interest and whimsy to the Downtown and the Theatre District, should be cultivated to expand the tradition, energy and audience.

Festivals and Movies on Worcester Common and in the Alleys

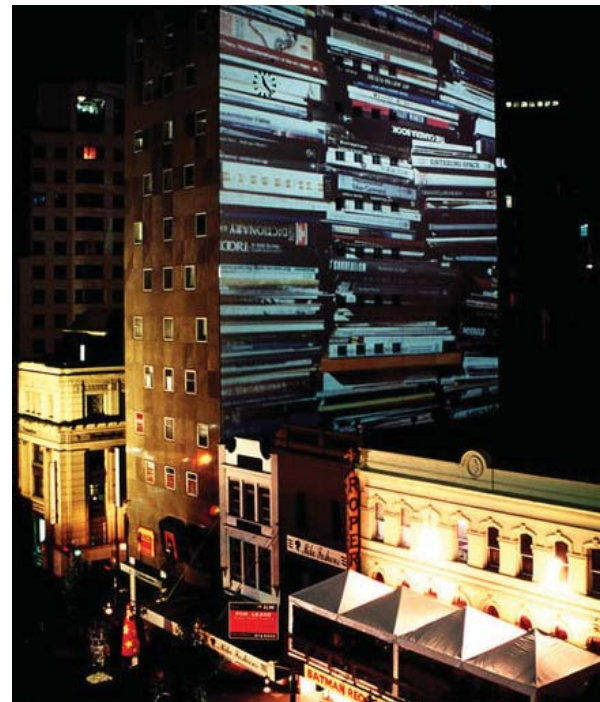
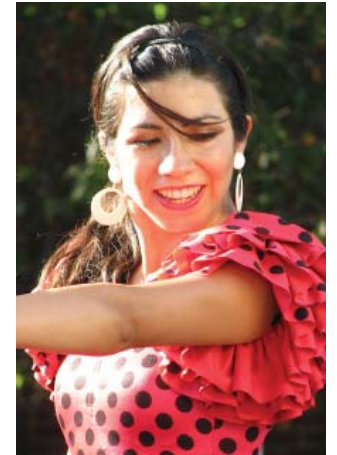
The Worcester Latin America Festival is held each year on Worcester Common with great success. As the “living room” of Downtown, the Common should be the priority location for all festivals. Events could include stART on the Street, First Night, Fourth of July celebrations, and the Festival of Trees. If hardscape is needed, Federal Street could be used in addition to the Common. Allen Court could become a temporary outdoor sculpture garden on summer nights. A festival associated with the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts could spill out onto Federal Plaza. On such a day, Southbridge Street and Federal Street could close to vehicles and serve as the front door of the event. A stage on Burnside Court could allow for even more activity.

Façade - Light Projection

The façade section of the Master Plan discusses this idea of projecting or painting onto blank sides of a building. The content of the light projection could change regularly to be topical to the seasons of the year or Downtown events. A projection on the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts’ wall could have a piece on ballet or theatre. Nature inspired movie loops can provide a neutral but interesting and unexpected element to the fabric of the city.



The Worcester Latin America Festival on the Common



A light projection of book spines on a building.



A Worcester Arts storefront display.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Art Storefront

Worcester State University, working with the Worcester Cultural Coalition, continues the City's successful campaign to install art within empty storefront windows. While the hope is that storefronts will fill with retail, this effort is a positive change in the interim. Once occupancy increases, art should not disappear. Local businesses and eateries should continue to display the work of local artists on their walls. A new internet-based business that facilitates a direct collaboration between business owners and artists is called Art Venue (www.artvenue.com). This is a Boston-based company that could be approached to expand to Worcester.

Pop-up Gallery

The pop-up gallery follows the concept of the pop-up dinner. Small scale, one or two night events can occur in a location such as Allen Court. A group of artists curate a show and hang it for a limited time. Simple food and drinks can be provided. If the event is held on a summer evening, it can be done without lighting, though some can always be strung up. An event of this nature does not require significant changes to the alley. It simply needs to be cleaned. It is quick and simple and can be a unique event that inspires more activities.

As the number and quality of these types of events and vendors grows, the District will start to become the place to go on lunch breaks for weekly food trucks, first Friday pop-up dinners, a weekend festival, or a Thursday night movie. It is important that these events have some level of frequency so that they become part of the regular rhythm of life Downtown.

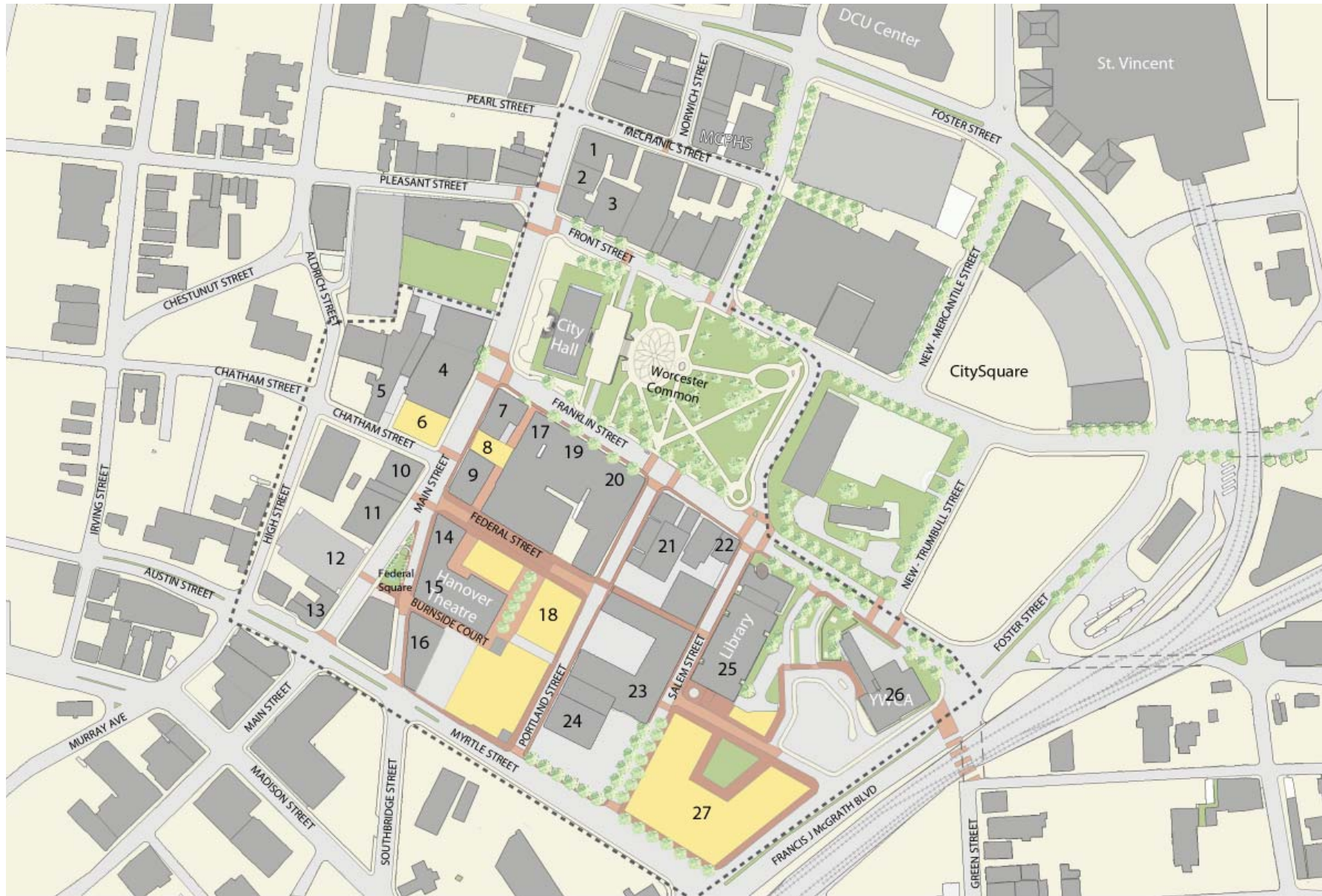
All these events are intended to build the appetite for and interest in Downtown storefront retail and restaurants of a higher quality than exists today. As the District population grows, the types and quality of retail establishments will improve to reflect the tastes and buying power of the changing demographics.

There are, however, potential barriers to meaningful improvements. Already, there are locations that lag behind the current market and, by not engaging with improvements, are reducing the potential of their neighbors. Building owners need to pursue tenants providing the highest and best use for the District. Of particular importance are the locations along major streets and mid-block connections such as the Midtown Mall. These locations should, in addition to the food options, provide amenities for the changing population such as a flower shop, hardware store, dry cleaner, stationery store, and sports clothing and equipment store.



Pop up galleries and dinners can activate shared-use alleys.

PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Plan indicating location of the secondary development opportunities described on the following pages.

Secondary Development Opportunities

There is no doubt that the recent level of investment in Downtown Worcester from large institutions and developers has enabled a new narrative of Worcester to emerge - to perhaps begin to shift the image of Downtown. The actions of the City, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, CitySquare, Saint Vincent Hospital and the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts among others have been significant. The WBDC is an eager participant, committed to furthering this revitalization with the renovation of 20 Franklin Street, as well as partnering with other property owners and investors on broader ventures. All of this is not enough, however. A successful Downtown does not rest on the shoulders of a few key players, but rather on all property and business owners. While substantial investment continues in the Downtown, the owners of properties with deferred maintenance, vacancies, or poorly designed storefronts must create a plan for improving their facilities to take advantage of and contribute to the next chapter in Worcester's tale.

Detailed Building Inventory

The pages that follow hold an inventory of most of the buildings within the study area (including those described previously under Primary Development Opportunities), indicating strengths, weaknesses and options for proposed future use.

1. *Shack's* 403 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- High-end retailer
- Day time activities

CHALLENGES

- Necessary façade improvements
- Security grates

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Retain use
- Renovate and update façade



PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. TV 13 - Worcester Community Cable Access 415 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- Community Resource

CHALLENGES

- Necessary Façade Improvements

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Retain use
- Renovate and update façade



3. Midtown Mall 10 and 22 Front Street

STRENGTHS

- Important indoor passage between Worcester Common, MCPHS, and DCU
- Available office and retail space

CHALLENGES

- Existing retail not responsive to downtown office clientele
- Necessary façade improvements to buildings on both Front and Mechanic

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Creative economy building with ground floor gallery, retail and restaurant space; lower level theatre space and upper level office and gallery space.
- Improve pedestrian path connecting MCPHS to Common
- Remove roof signage.
- Renovate and update façade, new signage



4. The Denholm Building
484 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- Iconic building
- Solid tenant base
- Prominent location

CHALLENGES

- Condominium ownership
- Under-utilized ground level
- Necessary façade improvements
- Inefficient layout
- High renovation costs

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Office or Institution
- Reconfigure ground level to create retail shop fronts with direct access to Main Street. Glass should be clear, not tinted. Introduce signage for shops.



5. PASOW Building
29 High Street

STRENGTHS

- Historic building
- Available parking supply

CHALLENGES

- Lack of financing
- Inefficient layout
- High renovation costs
- Code and safety concerns

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Market-rate housing
- Entertainment
- Recreation



PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Surface Lot 518 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- Available parking supply for Park Plaza tenants
- Prominent location

CHALLENGES

- Vacant parcel
- Disrupts street frontage continuity
- Detracts from district identity
- No landscape treatment

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Landscape treatment on surface lot following City guidelines
- Mural on side of Denholm Building
- Future development pad
- Stormwater retention demonstration as part of parking landscape
- Potential development site - parking will have to be relocated



7. Park Plaza 507 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- Prominent location
- Historic building
- Available parking supply

CHALLENGES

- Acquisition price and renovation/rehabilitation costs
- Limited ground-level activity
- Under-utilized residential

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Market-rate or graduate student housing
- Boutique hotel
- Renovate lobby and improve ground-level retail and storefronts.



8. Main Street Block
517-521 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- Prominent location

CHALLENGES

- Renovation/rehabilitation necessary
- Significant façade improvements necessary
- Code and safety concerns
- Small floor plates

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Demolition of existing building and new construction of connection to performance space/conference center in 20 Franklin Street. Alternatively, renovate existing buildings with ground-level retail and tie upper floors into adjacent apartment buildings for unique units.
- Replace signage



9. Former Filene's
531- 545 Main Street & 17 Federal Street

STRENGTHS

- Historic building
- New café
- Prominent location
- Large retail floor plate

CHALLENGES

- Limited parking
- Multiple-condominium ownership and absentee owners
- Code and safety concerns

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Market-rate and graduate student housing
- Renovate Federal Street façade to include more transparency at a window to solid ration of 3:1.
- Improve shop front displays and signage.
- Examine ground floor retail and restaurant alternatives



PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The Money Stop - Pawn Shop 526 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- Prominent location

CHALLENGES

- Roof signage
- Retail not responsive to downtown existing office clientele
- Vacant upper level

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Retail or restaurant
- Remove roof sign
- Storefront improvements including: remove bars and signs in windows, replace awning.
- Office or residential in upper level.



11. Small Business Service Bureau 554 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- Solid tenant base
- Occupied office
- Prominent location

CHALLENGES

- Limited ground-level activity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Replace ground level office with retail or restaurant
- Remove visual barriers on ground level



12. Federal Plaza Garage
570 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- Provides convenient supply of parking to workers and theatre patrons.

CHALLENGES

- Under-utilized ground level
- Necessary façade improvements
- Façade does not relate to scale and proportion of adjacent buildings

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain current use
- Renovate façade – clean and introduce exterior decorative screen (e.g., a green screen).



13. Colton Building
588-596 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- Prominent location
- Well maintained

CHALLENGES

- Not fully occupied
- Limited ground-level activity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Replace ground level office with retail and restaurant.
- Remove visual barriers from ground level windows
- Residential upper levels



PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

14. Goral Building 551 Main Street

STRENGTHS

- Prominent location

CHALLENGES

- No parking
- Acquisition price
- Necessary façade improvements
- Small floor plate

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ground-floor restaurant
- Upper level office or theater space
- Renovate facade



15. Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts 2 Southbridge Street

STRENGTHS

- Prominent location
- Historic building
- Successful renovation
- Improved identity of Downtown Worcester

CHALLENGES

- Lack of complementary services in the adjacent area
- Perception of safety in area

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain current use
- Public Art – light projection on northern exterior wall.



16. Steven's Block
40-70 Southbridge Street

STRENGTHS

- Prominent location
- Architecture

CHALLENGES

- Not fully occupied
- Limited ground-level activity
- Limited parking

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Retail
- Office
- Remove visual barriers from ground level windows.



17. Former Telegram & Gazette Building
20 Franklin Street

STRENGTHS

- Unique space in prominent location
- Historic use
- Available parking supply

CHALLENGES

- Inefficient layout and limited ground-level activity
- Environmental remediation
- High renovation costs

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Innovation Center, institutional use, conference facility, and restaurant on Federal Street
- Renovate Franklin Street façade to reflect innovation of use with minimum window to solid ration of 3:1.



PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

18. Former T&G Lot 30 Federal Street

STRENGTHS

- Available parking supply
- Adjacent to Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts

CHALLENGES

- Expansive
- Not pedestrian friendly

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Landscape treatment to reduce scale of lot and conform to City guidelines
- Improve pedestrian connections
- Surface & structural parking
- Two potential development pads adjacent along Federal Street
- Two new plaza/pedestrian paths connecting the new garage and Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts to Federal Street



19. Bay State Bank 28 Franklin Street

STRENGTHS

- Prominent location
- Historic building
- Occupied office space

CHALLENGES

- Limited ground-floor activity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain office
- Reintroduce retail on ground level



20. Bancroft Commons
50 Franklin Street

STRENGTHS

- Prominent location
- Historic building
- Successful renovation
- Improved identity of Downtown Worcester

CHALLENGES

- Vacant ground level

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain current use
- Make ground level retail improvements – shop, restaurant, gym



21. Paris Cinema
68 Franklin Street

STRENGTHS

- Prominent location
- Historic building

CHALLENGES

- Vacant
- Renovation/rehabilitation costs
- Necessary façade improvements
- Code and safety concerns

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Movie theater
- Dinner theater
- Development pad
- Interim improvements to Franklin Street facade



PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

22. Commercial/Residential Properties on Franklin Street 60 and 72-82 Franklin Street

STRENGTHS

- Historic building

CHALLENGES

- Limited ground-level activity
- Renovation needed
- Retail not responsive to downtown existing clientele

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Renovate buildings and residential units
- Activate ground-level with retail to respond to existing office and residential clientele
- Improve storefront signage



23. Portland Street Lofts 26 Portland Street

STRENGTHS

- Successful renovation
- Market-rate residents downtown

CHALLENGES

- Partially vacant ground level
- Scale of building limits District pedestrian connections

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain current use
- Landscape surface parking lots
- Introduce ground level retail in vacant space
- Create pedestrian connection between Portland and Salem Streets through ground floor of existing parking structure



24. Printer's Building
44 Portland Street

STRENGTHS

- Historic building
- Mix of uses unique to downtown

CHALLENGES

- No landscape treatment on surface lot
- Limited ground-level activity
- Limited parking

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain current use
- Activate ground-level with façade improvements and/or retail on Portland Street
- Landscape surface parking lot



25. Worcester Public Library
3 Salem Square

STRENGTHS

- Improve identity of Downtown Worcester
- Community resource
- Available parking supply

CHALLENGES

- No entrance on Franklin Street
- No ground-level activity on Franklin Street

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand park on Library Lane entrance
- New plaza bookstore/cafe
- Maintain existing use
- Activate Franklin Street façade with entrance
- Introduce passive or active programming in Salem Street portico. Possibilities include chairs for sitting or cafe.



26. YWCA
0-4 YWCA Way

STRENGTHS

- Community resource
- Available parking supply

CHALLENGES

- Tot lot on busy road
- Entrance does not address street
- Surface lot is not shared
- Building siting disrupts street front continuity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reconfigure parking lot and increase open space
- Move tot lot away from Franklin Street
- Create pedestrian spine to connect entrance to Library entry.



27. McGrath Parking Lot
Salem Street

STRENGTHS

- Available supply of parking to District

CHALLENGES

- Not pedestrian-friendly
- Dominated by surface parking
- Minimal landscaping

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Potential development pad
- New plaza on Library Lane facing Library Plaza
- Merge with YWCA lot to have shared surface lot



